WATER CARVED OUT THE MOUNTAINS
Policy communication of Engaged Buddhists related to international development cooperation.

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Abstract
The study “Water carved out the mountains. Policy communication of Engaged Buddhists related to international development cooperation” contributes to an understanding of development from perspectives of non-denominational action among so called Engaged Buddhists. Departing from qualitative interviews with nine leaders of socially engaged organizations from five Asian countries, the systemic programming resulting from their ideals are compared to key principles and programming of international development cooperation. Responding to the question: “What policy ideals shape the development programming, and can these be linked to forms of power and the rights-based approach?” this inter-disciplinary and multi-sited study feeds into the increased interest in faith-based expressions within the general public sphere, and specifically in the development industry.

Guided by the ontology of critical realism, a mixed method is used shaped by qualitative interviews and participatory observations, enabling both analysis of meanings and development programming. Based on their views on Buddhist ethics and practices, the leaders address development topics common today. Policies expressed are placed within a communication culture for change, yet not necessarily by conventional confrontational advocacy modes. Diverse understandings are at play, such as how to convey meanings of “kindness”. Although not referring to concepts common within the social and cultural structures of contemporary international development cooperation, the actors develop methods based on principles of participation in particular and the work today can also be related to other principles of the Human Rights Based Approach. The policies and programming are linked to invisible, informal and formal forms of power although informants refer to interpretations of compassion, inter-relatedness and non-dualism, among other.

From a perspective of development cooperation, a hypothetical argument is advanced suggesting that the informants do not differ at substantial level related to their understanding and practice of Buddhism or their general approaches to development topics, as much as they differ regarding their approach to programming aimed at influencing forms of power. The common criticism of Buddhists not addressing power can then for this group be nuanced, and indicatively suggested not to be valid regarding invisible and informal power, but rather regarding formal power.

Academic fields: Communication for development with reference to sociology of religion, political science, global studies and multi-sited ethnography.

Key words: Engaged Buddhism, Civil Society Organizations, Faith-Based Organizations, Human Right Based Approach, participation, complexity/systemic approaches, power, Thich Nhath Hanh, Sister Chan Khong, Sulak Sivaraksa, Bikkhuni Dhammananda, A.T. Ariyaratne, Sarvodaya.
Acronyms

The acronyms used for informants’ names are presented in section 1.1.1 and in References.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ComDev</td>
<td>Communication for Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
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<td>FBO</td>
<td>Faith-Based Organization</td>
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<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
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<td>HRBA</td>
<td>Human Right Based Approach</td>
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<td>INEB</td>
<td>International Network of Engaged Buddhists</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Nongovernmental Organization</td>
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<td>OECD-DAC</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee</td>
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<td>UDHR</td>
<td>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>WB</td>
<td>The World Bank</td>
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Front page illustration by the author: Systemic Bodhi trees for development action from Sri Lanka and India.
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1. INTRODUCTION

The title is a reference to the former Thai professor of Buddhism, Chatsumarn Kabilsingh today female monastic named Bhikkhuni Dhammananda. She questioned my war-like metaphors when interviewing her, such as “your struggle”, “fight for power”, indicating that it represents an ethics leading to less interconnectedness and emotional sustainability. As I asked for alternatives, she suggested me to regard the topics discussed - social change and legislative reforms benefitting women’s position as leaders - not like a dualistic combat aiming at harming opponents, but like an essential liquid:

“What happens when you allow water to run? Water seems to be so…ineffective, in a way. But isn’t it water that actually carved out the mountains? So when we start looking at it this way, we can use water. And water is always nurturing.”

In conclusion, not contesting what we discussed, we seemed to differ regarding how to address it.

This study aims at understanding how leaders within the non-denominational movement of Engaged Buddhism express their work at policy level, and if the programming related to the policies can be related to practices within international development cooperation (often called aid). My interest for this research has grown out of two experiences from working with support to civil society organizations addressing democracy and human rights, at the Swedish International Cooperation Agency (Sida). Firstly, I have been managing Sida’s cooperation with Buddhist development workers in Asia, in particular within the field of media production, which has made me aware of that they are influenced by Buddhism in their profession and that they make decisions partly based on this. Secondly, I have managed cooperation with Christian civil society development actors and experienced their frustration when both I and my peers haven’t shared their vocabulary, or grasped the claimed effects of their so called holistic approaches to development programming. Holistic approaches also called systemic approaches based on complexity theories are increasingly used as programming principle, and within the field of Communication for Development/ComDev (Lennie & Tacchi 2013:45). ComDev is an interdisciplinary field of theory and practice that among other explore ways to analyze, design and evaluate initiatives for societal change from a perspective of communication. I have found that the informants within the movement of Engaged Buddhism have enabled me to study both identified features: how programming can
be influenced by specific interpretations of moral guidelines and beliefs, and how suggested effects from systemic programming can be analyzed and compared with other actors’ claimed effects.

Buddhism is a pluralistic major world religion. Its adherents and leaders express both common and contradictory views based on highly contextual and most varied reasoning. 99 percent of the 486 million adherents globally lived 2010 in the Asia-Pacific region (Pew Research Center 2015). Statistics on religion are however uncertain in most Asian countries, including the densely populated China.

Being a multi-sited study and relating to several academic fields, it answers the question: *What policy ideals shape the development programming, and can these be linked to forms of power and the rights-based approach?*

The point of departure is the identified increased interest for religion in development and society, and Christianity and Islam attracting most attention both in the public sphere as in development cooperation. Scholars from various fields call for further studies of the cross-sectional nexus of religion and development. The thesis contributes to further the understanding of Buddhist development action by a significant global Buddhist movement, from the point of view of nine leaders of civil society organizations with recognized impact. The informants originate from Sri Lanka, Japan, India, Thailand and Vietnam, the latter working in exile.

Qualitative interviews and participatory observations were performed in five countries 2011-2012 guided by critical realism. This theory of science is suggested to comprehensively pave way for inter-disciplinary work and mixed methods for the researcher to enable theories of the way in which underlying social and cultural formations work to structure everyday action (Deacon, Pickering, Golding & Murdoch 2010:11).

The interviews reflect ideals, visions and policies. Some informants are world famous thanks to years of experience and writings in English, others have recently started. With exemption of the Japanese informants, their development objectives are primarily reforming society, not relief in crisis. Their programming aims to influence social and/or economic improvements of poor and/or all inhabitants within a country from a perspective of poverty that here is understood as multidimensional: inclusive of more aspects than material resources such as well-being, influence and possibilities (Sen 2001). The organizations
represented have been identified as formally eligible to receive support from donor resources (governmental, bilateral, multinational, philanthropy, private or individual) and activities are designed and implemented by the recipients themselves. Some of the organizations represented have or were at the time for the study, supported via both secular and Christian development actors.

The policies expressed by the informants are at a first stage analyzed discursively from their interpretation and negotiation on Buddhist ideals, and at a second stage is the programming influenced by these policies analyzed from modes of action and target groups related to three themes. These themes are not the only points of departure for assessment, analysis and action of development programs within the contemporary social and cultural structure of international development cooperation, but they are most common ones: the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) here also called rights-based approach, communication for change, and power analysis.

Policies shall be understood as central ideas officially agreed by a group of persons, decisive for strategies of action. Eyben describes policies as testable responses, “if x then y”: “to an objectively real problem the existence and nature of which is judged as independent from the political positioning of those making the observation.” (2010:5).

Conclusions can’t be made from the material on how the communicated ideas are implemented or perceived by others. Assumingly, there are interesting gaps to be studied in the future, such as communicated ideals reflected by the experiences of the participants and opponents, and the nature of claimed results compared to non-Buddhist development organizations claiming similar results.

1.1 Leaders of a significant movement
In Routledge’s Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Deitrick states that Engaged Buddhism (also called “Socially Engaged Buddhism”) is recognized as one of the most significant movements in contemporary Buddhism (2010:310-318). It is described as a lose network of diverse phenomena, an international network of groups and individuals often developed in isolation from each other. The struggle against colonial powers is referred to as approximated starting point for these responses, while later action has coincided with anti-war movements and pro-democracy movements (Watts & Okano 2012:247). The Noble Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar describes in the essay In Quest for Democracy, how such process for democracy spread in the 1980s. People actively sought to put the meaning of the word
democracy into practice and addressed the monastics (monks and nuns) for understanding what good governance could mean as opposed to bad (1995:168) “The Burmese people, who have no access to sophisticated academic material, got to the heart of the matter by turning to the words of the Buddha on the four causes of decline and decay.”

As global networks have developed, most notably the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) since 1989, Deitrick means that the term Engaged Buddhism refer both to diverse groups and individuals who seek to transform society according to their views on Buddhist principles, as well as to a loosely organized movement of global significance. Today, there are internationally recognized Engaged Buddhists from various countries and traditions, and certain transnational co-operations are on-going between Asia and North America in particular.

King has noted (2009) like I in this study, that not all individuals subscribing to features of Engaged Buddhism label themselves as such. The Japanese priest Gakugen Yoshimizu symptomatically told to me that the label implies that other kinds of Buddhist practices are disengaged and as thus inferior, an implication expressing undesired dualism and arrogance. Given that the term Engaged Buddhist is debated, not only by its practitioners as later sections show, it may be altered later on.

1.1.1 Table: Overview of the informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Informant and location for field work</th>
<th>Organisation Webpage (in English)</th>
<th>Tradition Work areas (examples)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
2. Savita Jadhav (SJ), Sadhana Institute for Sustainable Development in Pune, India.  
- Founder and expert on social action for development. No website but presentations at: www.cry.org/projects/Maharashtra-project3.html  
- Ambedkarite Buddhist. (Probably inspired by Theravada)  
- + 15 years of activism.  
- Regional advocacy on dalit’s human rights, social action in slum areas for access to social welfare system and citizenship. Non-Buddhist dalits in cantonement areas are invited.

3. Dr A.T. Ariyaratne (ATA), Moratuwa, Sri Lanka.  
- Founder and president. The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement  
  - www.sarvodaya.org  
- Theravada.  
- + 55 years of activism.  
- Gandhian approaches have influenced the programming.  
- Self help-oriented community development, peace and reconciliation, community governance, youth training, economic empowerment including micro-banking. Occasional relief work as exemption.  
- Inter-religious.

4. Koji Fujimaki (KF) and 5. Gakugen Yoshimizu, (GY) chef and priest. Tokyo.  
- One spoonful. Co-founders.  
- No webpage in English.  
- Jodo Shin-shu (Mayahayana)  
- + 7 years of activism.  
- Soup-kitchen and relief work, funeral services and coordination of support to homeless people. Inter-religious

6. Yukan Ogawa (YO) research assistant, priest and temple manager, Tokyo.  
- Co-founder of the Association of priests who grapple with the suicide issue.  
- No webpage in English.  
- Jodo Shin (Mahayana)  
- Personal letter exchange since 2008 on suicide, relief work in radioactive areas, research. Inter-religious  
- + 7 years of activism.

- Member of the Association of priests who grapple with the suicide issue.  
- Soto Zen (Mahayana)  
- + 7 years of activism.  
- Personal letter exchange since 2008 on suicide, counselling, relief work in radioactive areas, etc. Inter-religious
+ 20 years of activism.  
Advocacy for reforming of Thai rules for female monks. Spiritual teachings.  
Workshops with female prisoners and education of poor girls. Inter-religious |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
+ 50 years of activism.  
Author, publisher, democracy activist, organiser and founder of several social ventures and CSOs. Inter-religious |

### 1.2 Structure

The study has a non-traditional structure for enabling a comprehensive understanding despite combining many perspectives. Cross-disciplinary approaches come with specific challenges, such as the need for guidance on what marks the study or topic looking at it from different academic fields. After an introduction on the position of religion within development practices, issues that have shaped the study, a chapter follows describing theory and method used. The two next chapters identify literature and themes directly followed by analysis of, and conclusions from, the material. This is a way to enable clarity despite the large material reflected in a cross-disciplinary multi-country prism: Chapter 3 departs from perspectives on religious actors working with social change, and chapter 4 departs from major theoretical and practical strands within contemporary international development cooperation. Chapter 5 then presents analysis and conclusions from a model that identifies key findings. Suggestions for further studies are collected in Chapter 6, and a discussion follows on possible areas of interest for both Engaged Buddhists and major donors to elaborate further if wanting to cooperate more.
1.3 Religion and development – from taboo to specific interest

Studying religious actors within the field of development comes with a significant ideological back-drop. Fifteen years ago, the sociologist Ver Beek argued that neither development practitioners nor development scholars paid much attention to the role of religion and rather seemed to consciously avoid the topic thus being taboo (2000:31). From a content analysis of three leading development journals during 15 years, he found religion and spirituality only mentioned less than a handful times. He argued that the take on religion reflected a strong secularist conception of religion as being irrelevant at best, an obstacle to development at worst. His findings was supported by others describing the period up to then as “decades of neglect and narrow focus on the material, primarily economic, aspects of development” (Clarke 2013:13).

Today, this theoretical taboo is definitely broken as there is a strong interest in understanding how to include religion in the development work and why. In particular multinational donors have developed guidelines on how to relate to religious actors, for example the World Bank and the United Nation agencies for development (UNDP), education, science and culture (UNESCO), and population (UNFPA) and a few governmental donors such as the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Department for International Development (Dfid) of the United Kingdom. Numerous policy making initiatives have resulted in reports and research (Jones & Juul Petersen 2011:1294).

It is unclear to what extent the theoretical interest has changed the actual financial support. Religious non-governmental actors within international development have increased in numbers the last 25 years, but so has indeed other nongovernmental actors, which implies a donor interest in the benefits offered by civil society activists primarily, rather than religion. In 2008, the view of religion as obstacle was identified as still valid related to Norwegian researchers and donors - and even suggested to convey fear of religion (Hovland 2008:177). Swedish religious nongovernmental actors have told me that Sida, where I work since 2004, commonly treat them as non-religious and staff discuss everything but religion. Faith-based organizations have called for a more professional attitude to the fact that religion influences the world independently of what development professionals think of this fact (Svenska Missionsrådet 2013:31). Nilsson and Moksnes write with Europe in focus: “The notion and norm of secularisation has fostered a kind of religious illiteracy that is widespread today, and many have lost the language for talking about values, beliefs, and spiritual and religious issues.” (2013:4).
Further, Sida has routines or guidelines on how to address ideologically driven development efforts related to political parties, labor rights or gender or sexual minorities. But despite exploring the role of religion in several internal projects since 2009, there are no guidelines or routines related to faith, and religion is not encouraged in the obligatory tools for analysis of interventions. This structural downplaying of religion as analytical category has not hindered the staff from approving support to faith-based organizations based on their instrumental qualities. It can also be noted that formal guidelines not always fulfill the visions of those advocating for them.

My personal view is that the critique raised by religious actors of wanting to talk more about religious issues with donors, demands a balancing of perspectives. As officer in an organization accountable to persons of all faiths, I should be able to understand and respect all actors and assess their approaches and methods, but not necessarily confirm a specific moral referencing. Understanding does include understanding others vocabulary, which can be difficult as concepts often refer to assumed meanings which varies between actors. Key concepts put forward of all actors therefore demand critical attention. This experience has spurred my own interest for religious actors as it feeds into a challenge often discussed within ComDev: how to understand and evaluate complex societal processes of other cultures involving values, meanings and socialization.

1.3.1 Religion being more visible in society
Development actors relationship to religious development actors is as suggested above, linked to the culture of donors and dominant views on religion in society. The shift from taboo to broader interest coincides with a shift of focus with particular impact in European contexts, but not there only: A long time dominant assumption during the twentieth century in Europe, most often referred to an effect following early influential scholars on sociology and religion such as Marx, Durkheim and Weber, of religion becoming less relevant and influential both in the private and public sphere as the societies evolve into increased modernization (Hovland 2008:171; Stenström 2014a:8; Demker 2014:115) Hence the more modern a society becomes, the more secular, which implicitly meant more based on economic and technical rationales and less spiritual rationales.

The governance systems in Europe may be based on non-religious grounds and as such being secular bodies for decision-making, but religion did not disappear (Demker 2013:116). The theory on increased modernity - decreased religiosity is now strongly
questioned by scholars instead searching to understand new representations of beliefs and “the new visibility” of faiths in the public sphere (Habermas 2010:15-16; Stenström 2014:7; Ziebertz & Riegel, 2009:295-298).

It is argued when the turn started, but the so called privatization of religion during the twentieth century in Europe is commonly mentioned as a precondition. Scholars across disciplines seem to agree that access to globalized communication networks has fueled the change, and that the global attention on the nexus of religion, society, development and foreign policies propelled in the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks by the global militant Muslim organization Al-Qaeda on the predominantly Christian USA (Jones & Juul Petersen 2011:1293; Weibull 2011:548).

In contrast, religious actors in developing countries have continuously been visible in the public sphere. Woodhead stresses that the above mentioned western secularization and modernization theory is not valid worldwide as there are several ways of being modern, and that modernization can be both approached from stimulus from the outside, and be internal of a particular society (2009:3). Expressions of belief have changed in Asia for example with the introduction of new religions and with contemporary forms of identity politics (Jones & Juul Peterson 2011:1293). Internal reasons have influenced the religious map, such as increased access to education, the pre-colonial history and corrupted relationship between religious and secular powers.

1.4 Religions as donor-darlings
Independently of what anyone think of religion in development, it’s there. As one set the light on religious development actors, their diversity, hybridity and multitude is overwhelming. Some of the world’s largest nongovernmental actors for international aid are faith-based, such as World Vision and the Aga Khan Development Network. UNFPA states that between 30-60 percent of health care and educational services in many developing countries are provided by faith-based organizations (2009:1). This estimation is also reflected in various country analysis of the World Bank (Deneulin & Bano 2009:1). Faith-based actors working primarily within smaller or more contested thematic sectors of international development cooperation, such as democracy and human rights being in focus of this study, are fewer.

However, the distribution of resources from international donors directed at actors of different faith can be argued to be skewed in favor of Christianity. Among the valid agreements with faith-based actors at Sida 2015, it is safe to suggest without statistical proof
that Christian organizations are in majority both in numbers of agreements and funds compared to other faiths. Juul Petersen presents a survey showing that of all 3183 Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) with consultative status in the United Nations Economic and Social Council, ten percent (320) consider themselves religious (2010). Christian actors were more than half of the faith-based actors with consultative status in the UN, 15 percent were Muslim and only a few percent Hindu and Buddhist (2010). Juul Petersen states that Buddhist development actors hence are being “grossly underrepresented”.

1.4.1 Possible reasons
This section discusses the low presence of Buddhist actors within international development cooperation industry today from a perspective of social and cultural structures that can be conflicting.

Historically, contemporary international development has emerged partly from hundreds of years of missionary work. The Church of Sweden’s International work stems from 1874. It can therefore be suggested that Christian organizations in particular receive recognition and funding based on supreme professionalization from long experience. However, professional development actors of other ideologies, such as secular ones, are dominating the cooperation with major donors despite not having such history.

It can further be argued that the culture of the donor industry today promote modes of organization that are less appropriate for Buddhists. When a Dutch-Danish-English consultant team of scholars was assigned by Sida to find faith-based organizations with a certain administrative capacity that work with human rights and democratization (such as covered in this study), the team concludes that the faiths have substantially different organizational structures (Danish Institute of Human Rights 2014:9): “Christian and Muslim organizations tend to operate as a single operational body working through field offices with central headquarter, something that arguably makes them easier to identify as formal and well-established entities. In contrast, Buddhist and Hindu organizations in Asia do some extent operate either through networks or form movements not always making it very easy to pin-point single entities that on their own fulfil the Sida strategy.” I relate this finding to a Christian culture marked by centennial experiences of large-scale and effective, centralized organization modes that has been historical rewarding for ecclesial expansion and normative dominance. The organizational effectiveness has likely enabled both western colonization and
organizational traditions that are more positively assessed today, as reflected in the modernity paradigm.

Comparing this with the history of Buddhism, I find that Buddhist organizations have not had such expansive centralized cross-national approach the last 1000 years even if attempts have been made. Secondly, later sections will present that social actors such as Engaged Buddhists put emphasis on popular participation and networking, as described above, instead of large-scale centralized effectiveness. Thirdly, large-scale centralized Buddhist organizations addressing social issues exist, but do not necessarily reflect organizational ideals by donors such as participation, transparency, non-discrimination and conflict sensitive approaches. Or, they do not necessarily need funds as they generate income from like-minded state or private sector. Fourthly, the central Buddhist practice of giving (dana) is geared towards monastics and not laypeople (King 2009:23, BD). It is in many Buddhist schools assumed less spiritual rewarding to sponsor laypeople’s activities. I suggest that this central cultural feature likely influences organizations capacity to grow and expand. In Christian and Muslim cultures, donating to civil society and charities, or to religious leaders, is not as different spiritually.

A majority of the countries in Asia receive international development support. It could further be hypothetically argued that the lack of recognition of Buddhist and Hindu actors is not only related to western negative views on religion as ver Beek noted, but related to ideologically preferred religions. If donors claim to act without bias of specific politics or ideologies, a rational policy direction would be to monitor and mitigate the imbalance even if it means to favor other than Christian actors. It is however beyond the scope of this study to analyze if this is instrumentally reasonable, or politically feasible.

Finally, in many Western countries (such as Sweden) is Buddhism not a major religion and has been little discussed in the public sphere compared to adherents of Christianity and Islam. Buddhist discourses in Asia commonly differ from western popular understandings. For example, a mainstream understanding of Buddhism in many Asian countries is connected to ideas and practices on death, suffering, compassion, funeral services, merit-giving rituals, mutual courtesy by political and religious leadership, and not rarely militarism. This is commonly not the case in the West. Scholars of religion and society in contrast highlight an on-going Western stereotyping of Buddhism as exotic, peaceful, compassionate, happiness-oriented, introvert, individualistic, un-authoritarian, and without
dogma (Thurfjell 2013:126-137, Plank 2011:13, Weibull: 2012:548). Western bias influencing development donors may hypothetically lead to wrong assumptions of and limited attention to the activism. As Sulak Sivaraksa says in my primary material:

“The concept Engaged Buddhism, I think is particularly helpful to you in the West. You have such a romantic view on Buddhism. It should be so exotic. But it is simple - learn not to be selfish and support other people in a persistent and sustainable manner. At all levels.”

Scholars, such as those contributing in the most interesting anthology “Buddhist warfare” have started to describe how Buddhist ideals and texts have been negotiated to support warfare, compassionate murders, racism and religious violence (Jerryson & Juergensmeyer, eds. 2010). But such studies have so far not travelled far from the scholarly sphere. The 14th Dalai Lama has occasionally been criticized in the West, such as for homophobic statements that he later regretted publicly. But most Buddhist criticism of his ideas has stayed in Asia, such as related to the effects of non-violence, his statements on karma related to disasters, or that he is not establishing a lineage for female full-level monastics as my informant BD has criticized him publicly for.

In addition, Engaged Buddhists have criticized Buddhist actors for not being enough outspoken, which will be discussed later on. This intra-faith debate feeds into the general image of Buddhist actors as being passive, introvert bystanders.

Finally, another feature of the major religion Buddhism today is that it is challenging to define as it is marked by hybridity and comparatively little standardization and centralized ideas. Keown discusses how far religions have developed frameworks for a social gospel and says that “there is no doubt that Buddhism lags far behind religions such as Christianity and Islam.” (2000:57).

In conclusion, the statistical under-representation of Buddhist organizations in international development cooperation may hypothetically be referred to various forms of biases that possibly enables a structural blindness for Buddhist development actors by Western donors: Buddhism as introvert and inactive; organizational preferences of centralized partners with administrative efficiency; preferences of Christianity over other religions; and preference of expansive technical grand scale approaches not benefitting otherwise relevant Buddhist actors. The lack of nuanced public discussion of Buddhism in the West does not
decrease possible biases, nor the lack of homogeneity and coordination among Buddhist actors. Organizational preferences of some Buddhists can hinder cooperation when donors prefer large-scale effective centralization, if alternative approaches are not advanced.

The issues raised above point at a need to understand actors from not just their expressed ideas but from the perspectives of a) their view on Buddhism and its role related to societal challenges, b) organizational modes and c) programming for specific results. These themes will be studied and discussed onwards in the thesis.
2. THEORY AND METHOD

Departing from qualitative interviews with nine leaders of Engaged Buddhism in Asia, their communicated ideals are first discursively and contextually analysed, and then is programming deriving from these policies analysed thematically from action modes and power. The latter are identified as not the only but key features within the cultural and social structures of international development cooperation today. This section presents the ontology critical realism, the approach of mixed methods, delimitations, research stages and reflects influential experiences such as cross-cultural views on interviewing. Special attention is given to methods on how to study religion as this is not commonly addressed within ComDev studies. The primary material consists of qualitative interviews and participatory observations, and secondary material scholarly literature and statements from organizations.

2.1 Research design and stages

I aimed initially at presenting a Degree Project in the form of a book script with reportages. My ComDev studies have been paused due to private reasons and at the time for my Degree Project, the course instructions had become more traditional. As a consequence, I both have a book-script finished as presented in Appendix 3, and a separate academic study based on some of the interviews. The book-script presents a more critical view on Buddhism than dominant in Sweden, and can be described from Richardson’s typology as part factual essay-writing, part auto-ethnographic writing including my personal world-view in the presentation of cultural phenomena (2000:930). Richardson argues from a postmodernist position that various forms of writing contributes to knowledge, and to research: “By writing in different ways we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it.” (p923). I share this experience. The study benefits from the book-process and the effects are raised when relevant.

The research work has taken place in interconnected and often non-linear stages.

Research design and stages of the book-script:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2011-2012</th>
<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each chapter focuses on one informant, with exception of the chapter on Japan including many informants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The work on each chapter followed this process:</td>
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<tr>
<td>a) Research: literature, factual interviews with scholars and adherents</td>
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<td>b) Elicit narratives by scholars and within contemporary development programming</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Questionnaire</td>
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<td>d) Participatory participations</td>
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<tr>
<td>e) Interview</td>
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</table>
2) Reflecting upon the field-diary
3) Transcribing
4) Writing, including additional research
5) Re-adjusting the questionnaire, analyzing themes to address next
6) Selecting next informant

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Compiling all chapters and have each read by relevant factual experts in my network. All chapters being corrected and commented upon by a scholarly expert from the department of religion at Gothenburg University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rewriting the script.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Translating the script into English (on-going) and feedback process of informants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research design and stages of the Master thesis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Coincided with the above, excluding h).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Writing starts: Cataloging dominant themes in the interviews (transcriptions). See 2.6.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Analyzing themes compared to central programming principles within development cooperation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Refining development discourses into ComDev, HRBA and Power analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Develop a grounded indicative set of conclusions, cycling back to the above stages for verification and analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Suggesting an indicative model answering the question: What policy ideals shape the development programming, and can these be linked to forms of power and the rights-based approach?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Ontology

The philosophical system of assumptions on how phenomena in the world are related to each other underlying my study (the ontology) connects to the research paradigm of critical realism, a movement within philosophy and social sciences closely associated with Roy Bhaskar from England (Asher, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson & Norrie, eds. 1989). He writes that any adequate philosophy of science must find a way of grappling with a central paradox of science (Bashkar 1997:21 in Asher, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson & Norrie, eds. 1989:16). The paradox he refer to is that scientists in their activity produces knowledge which is a social product, but there is also another side of “knowledge” that there are things that exists without
being a product of peoples knowledge. He writes “If men ceased to exist sound would continue to travel and heavy bodies fall to earth in exactly the same way” even if no human being were there to know it.

Critical realism has served as a basis for the theoretical and methodological reflection of many social scientists interested in understanding the dialectic interrelation between society and individuals (Gorski 2013:665). Critical realism is commonly related to critique, or attempts to reconcile conflicting positions limiting research, of primarily three dominant theories framing discussions on method within the philosophy of science according to Gorski (2013:660): positivism, interpretivism and constructionism.

Positivism makes no ontological difference between natural and social entities but study them equally as objects, by promoting methods of investigation based on systematic observations. Recording relevant facts from quantities are favored, and empirical data produced by direct observation are assumed most scientific (Deacon, Pickering, Goldin & Murdock 2010:3). Interpretive traditions in contrast argue that social realities are linguistically constructed. These traditions inform anthropological research and are from a theoretical point of view not interested in establishing cause and effect, but exploring the ways people make sense of their social worlds and how they express these understandings (2010:5). Constructionism is according to Gorski an interpretive tradition that takes the issue of language further as it sees the natural sciences like just another realm of social life (2013:660).

Interpretive approaches with their focus on meaning-making, has been intensely endorsed by communication researchers according to Deacon, Pickering, Goldin and Murdock (2010:9). These scholars advance arguments promoting critical realism by referring to that communication research benefits from being inter-disciplinary and that it shall take into account the full range of investigative techniques produced by the various branches of social sciences and humanities (2010:10). Mixing methods is according to them central to critical realism, and as such promoted as useful.

Critical realism can according to them be regarded as an alternative to positivism. Both theories reject the idealism underpinning the interpretive stand that reality only exist in the ways people chose to imagine it, and both accepts that there are social and cultural structures shaping people’s options for action (2010:9). However, positivism mainly see things as one-way processing and does not theorize the diverse creativity that can explain how subjects change or can act as agents of change. Critical realism differs from positivism as
it stresses that social and cultural structures - as opposed to structures organizing the natural world - have impermanent and fluctuating traceable historical careers. They emerge in particular times, are modified by social action and transformed into something else. The researchers task is from this theory to study how general structures generate a variety of responses, bring them to light and, as Deacon, Pickering, Goldin and Murdock write, “explain how they work in order to encourage informed action aimed at eradicating barriers to equity and justice” (p9).

The informed action stemming from this study could for example be that suggested effects of the actors’ development work (which topics and aims can be argued to address equity and justice) could be defined and studied from instrumental perspectives rather than from Buddhist ideals only, which would make comparison with other development actors’ effect more possible.

**A cross-cultural reflection**

The philosophical assumption of critical realism is in short that objects and events exist independently of us, although the processes of perception and cognition of human beings form non-fixed meanings of them (New World Encyclopedia 2013). Such view of the world can interestingly enough from a cross-cultural perspective be found within traditions of Buddhism, too, and it can be argued to be expressed to me in the primary material. In my primary material for example, ATA explains the world from both the Buddhist teachings on the existing matter in nature, such as the five *skandhas*, and from Buddhist ideas in the abidharma-school that depart from an understanding that without training and right understanding do humans by nature see things automatically from a self-absorbed view shaped by subjective contextual interpretations (*propanca*). To further the comparison, ATA can by his supporters be argued to share the ambition guiding the critical realist: “to encourage informed action aimed at eradicating barriers to equity and justice”. With this cross-cultural reflection I am not in any way suggesting that Bhaskar was influenced by Buddhism primarily. However, he has made references to theosophy related to his parent’s active engagement in it (2010). Theosophy is a spiritual movement closely connected to the Theosophical Society founded by Helena Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott, who died 1907. In particular the latter has contributed to bringing interpretations of selected Buddhist texts to the West, and is remembered for designing the Buddhist flag with horizontal and vertical coloured lines frequently used in Theravada cultures.
Mixed methods

When working with development processes there is an ongoing negotiation whether to pay attention to the certain and actual only or to also include the possible, the uncertain. Bhasker has criticized the use of ontological realism when it is ignores underlying uncertainty and contradictions, such as in Dialectic, the Pulse of Freedom (2008). When Bhasker point at the need to take the uncertain into account when studying the world, this includes not only uncertain structural and natural changes over time, but also possible effects resulting from change agents relational understanding of the world. Critical realism is often argued to be a theory that can be pursued by a variety of methods including mixed ones. Deacon, Pickering, Golding and Murdock pursue this line and state that a relevant mix can incorporate the kind of work done by interpretive researchers but goes beyond them when they are confined to “mundane operations” within cultural systems (2010:10). The sum of the methods shall instead also include exploration of how the meanings and mundane activities are influenced by access to material resources (time, money) as well as social resources (access to supporting networks, confirmation if identity and value) and cultural resources (competence in language, culture, representation).

The programming ideals promoted by the informants in this study are unified by levels of system thinking, also called holistic or complexity thinking. A theory that among other encourages the researcher to study how general structures generate a variety of responses, is here argued to be in particular useful for understanding systemic approaches. Such concepts, also welcoming mixed methods for analysis, have raised increased interest within development practices the last decade, probably partly related to the increased understanding of the complexity of interactions in people’s lives such as simultaneous referencing to the global and local. Lennie and Tacchi suggest that systemic thinking is a new useful approach when designing and evaluating ComDev initiatives (2013:45). They argue that systemic perspective is guided by ethnographic research that recognize that programming promoting linear, step-by-step understandings of social change fail to capture the potentially positive impacts achieved via participatory processes.

A common approach is to map stakeholders or problems as an ecosystem of interrelated entities, presenting a variety of features of relevance for influencing change. My field observations have made me aware of that some, but not all organizations represented in this study have performed processes of systemic analysis of relevance for their work, as
presented on the cover of the thesis. Trees are used to map problems based on a variety of sources including participants’ views. In a second three, the mapped problems are commonly mirrored by suggested solutions.

Reflections on effects from the theory

The theory of critical realism in summary guides me in this study to both investigate how informants explain their view on different Buddhism, and to investigate how this world-view is set in action related to actual action modes influenced by impermanent cultural and social structures. What effect has then the theory of basic critical realism had on this thesis? I find that it has enabled me to both critically study primary and secondary textual sources (including transcriptions of interviews) from identified themes not commonly combined as they represent different dimensions—such as meanings derived from interpretations of Buddhism, and their possible relation to principles for targeted action within development cooperation practices. The latter has for example resulted in framing informants and the action they represent from aspects such as organizational form, mode of action, evangelism, type of programming, power dimensions and approach to communication. Scholars on Engaged Buddhism have to my knowledge paid little or none attention to features within the social and cultural structures of development cooperation practice and this study may therefore contribute to further additional perspectives.

2.3 Religion as culture for development

Both religion and development are complex and contextual concepts with numerous suggested definitions and delimitations. Development is simply understood in line with Roger’s suggestion: “widely participatory processes of social change, intended to bring about both social and material advancement” (Rogers 1976 as cited in Gumucio-Dagron, Alfonos & Tufte 2006:116). Religion is often connected to another complex term: culture. With the addition of culture also being expressed by societal practices, I settle with Castells interpretation of culture as “the set of values and beliefs that inform, guide and motivate people’s behavior” (2009:36).

The concept of religion is here approached as social constructs depending on social, cultural and historical reasons and interpretations based on faith-related assumptions related to cosmology or alike (Andersson & Sander 2009:42). I apply the broad and inclusive definition of religion suggested by Andersson and Sander as “everything human beings do and think based on the conviction that something exists beyond arbitrary ideas of absolute or
holy answers” (2005:59). Woodhead provides a complementary view by explicitly adding social dimensions (2009:11): “religions are social forms which use practices, symbols and beliefs, usually in a collective setting, to orient people to a higher or ultimate level of reality, thereby providing them with a template for ordering social and personal relationships in this life.” Today, scholars of Buddhism make sure to emphasis that the social and cultural traditions, the templates, are varied and not offering a single holistic concept to use for comparing deviations. Historically, Buddhism was not called by this name until framed and consolidated by educated Europeans in the nineteenth century (Cook, Laidlaw & Mair 2009:52).

In his dissertations on meta-narratives on justice, Rinker writes in relation to studies of Buddhism of Dalits/scheduled classes in India that British Colonialists and Indian Brahmin (highest class) intellectuals “have focused on Buddisms’ textual and philosophical analysis; on the other resides an interest in Buddhism’s practices in daily life.” (2009:41). Religions are commonly studied from definitions of substance or function. The substantial definition explores what the belief is or wants to be from its content, but also from experiences and values. From a functional point of view, religions are more broadly presented as systems of meaning and connection that fulfills various sociological, psychological or societal functions. Andersson and Sander argue that Sweden as example can be defined as a secular culture when using the definition of substance, as public decisions are not based on religious beliefs for example, but not necessarily from a functional point of view as religious beliefs are commonly expressed in peoples’ lives (2009:53-57).

Further, Habermas suggests that religious arguments must be “translated” to be understood in so called secular domains, giving the secular an advantage as “mother tongue”, and argues that a reciprocal learning process and will to understand the other is necessary (Habermas as cited in Axner 2013:43). This exercise primarily regard how Engaged Buddhists relate functionally to Buddhism and the discourses on substance underlying the activism, as I am interested in how the interpretations create meaning expressed in concrete and actual development action. However, in Chapter 4 I introduce a second exercise where I frame the action, or “translate” the action as Habermas suggest, by linking it to selected contemporary theoretical concepts in use by global normative actors when analyzing and designing programmes; the Human Rights Based Approach and concepts of power.
2.3.1 Methodological agnosticism
When I elaborate upon the Buddhist themes and work approaches that primary sources of the study refer to Buddhist ideas, and/or themes that secondary sources such as literature relate to Engaged Buddhism, my approach to religion can be referred to “methodological agnosticism”. This is a particular form of rational discourse according to Cox that has guided studies of religion for decades and "sought understanding without endorsing or denying a believer’s point of view” (2003: 4). I for example do not discuss theological perspectives on Buddhism or suggest to know what it really “is”, but describe the interpretations made by the sampling-unit or scholars. Nor do I take side by accepting or dismissing Buddhist ideas as true or false, but take an agnostic stand meaning that I do address the informant’s views as discourses. The aim is not to explore if their form of Buddhism is true or false, but to understand how the sampling-unit create their form of Buddhism by action, argumentation and references.

A risk raised against this attitude, according to Cox, is that influential worldviews of importance may be ignored such as possible meanings of the sacred (2003:5). The interviews in this study are marked by an absence of possible important meaning for informants as neither I nor the informants raise points regarding nodes of discourses commonly called irrational, such as assumed spiritual transcendence or supernatural force. Post-colonial critics has further addressed that methodological agnosticism does not invite reflexivity and transparence of the researchers view, whether one understands it oneself or not. In the study, my own initial bias regarding the concept karma has become clear to me for example related to the many new understandings of karma in Buddhism I later have understood. I have therefore strictly addressed interpretations of karma by referring to the secondary and primary sources, and highlighted that parallel meanings of karma may be in use for informants.

2.4 Delimitation of the sampling unit
The leaders have been chosen from the selection criteria of having influenced the local or global discourse on Buddhism according to literature. Further, they are selected from not only being vocal on how to implement ethics in action serving many, but also representing an organization working actively with inclusive projects for social or political change. This criteria exclude Engaged Buddhist that are discussing the ideas only, even if they are interesting. Informants are selected from the criteria of complementarity as I wanted to understand if Buddhist ideals shift when working with different approaches to development
programming or development topics. They further represent the two main traditions Theravada or Mahayana as I wanted to understand how they address scholars’ definition of being non-denominational. Finally, they are selected from accepting the label Engaged Buddhists even if they don’t call themselves so.

Two additional criteria are used; excluding leaders closely connected with state or political parties as this would open up for a most wide range of actors, and organizations having evangelistic objectives. These criteria come with severe difficulties regarding definitions discussed in later sections. To prompt one example: even if leaders of social activities who are the priests and monastics act exactly as secular professional workers do, they are still representing their functions to others. Primary functions include to grant primary religious practices such as rituals, readings and public interpretations of the Buddha’s teachings.

The criteria further exclude large interesting Buddhist organizations working on social issues and frame Engaged Buddhism narrowly compared to the dominant literature by scholars of religion. They seem in particular to have lower interest in problematizing evangelism and state-relationship compared to what is common within development cooperation theory and practices. The criteria reflect significant instrumental, moral and structurally influential standpoints common within the social and cultural structures of the development industry: Non-faith based donors accountable to populations and financial contributors of all faiths, such as the UN, do not as rule promote a specific faith as solution. For similar reasons, specific political parties are not promoted. An active support to evangelism or party politics, would limit both the legitimization and scope for funding of organizations claiming that they serve all equally.

As development donors support value-based solutions these points can be put forward as being unrealistic positions hiding agendas. Sections of the study show that religious actors are not excluded by development donors, for reasonable reasons, and political perspectives are raised. Understanding that addressing poor, gender equality, Human Rights and democratic development, intrinsically convey world-views and moral judgments, I consciously choose to exclude evangelism and close ties to the state, although this is difficult to delimit and monitor.

*Japanese exceptions*
Their development objectives are primarily reforming society, not relief in crisis. However, the Japanese informants deviate from this as can be seen in section 1.1.1. It has been valuable for cross-checking purposes to include them in the study, and also to understand Engaged Buddhism in a more rich country.

The Japanese have been selected differently from most others; not by recognition in literature, but from a snowballing process starting from Jonathan Watts, INEB activist and researcher at Keio University in Tokyo. The reason for this support is that Engaged Buddhism has a short and less visible history in Japan compared to the other countries, and the organizations fitting the above presented criteria are smaller.

2.5 Qualitative research and interviewing
The main research method is qualitative interviewing, combined with participatory observation. The interviews and observations have been performed at several sites.

The informant’s experiences and motivations have been expressed to me in qualitative interviews, hence several filters of subjectivity shapes the conclusions. The findings are products of inter-subjectivity and dialogic communication between me and the informants, but also related to our respective understanding of the concrete programming and action of their organizations. The kind of knowledge produced accordingly is following the tradition of phenomenology, a study of experiences, psychological phenomena and structures from the first-person point of view (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:2013, Kvale 2009:29 ). The content or meaning of an experience is according to this philosophy connected to specific conditions influencing all persons involved, including myself.

Qualitative interviews have been performed with the informants, mainly recorded with tape-recorded. The research interview is compared to conventional conversations between persons, highly conceptualized. It is not a chat of any kind but follow a variety of forms with adherent ethics and consequences (Kvale 2009:3). It is not an activity between equal partners as the researcher defines and controls the situation. The main method of investigative qualitative research according to Kvale is “semi-structured life world interviews” a research interview based on the conversation of daily life and being a professional conversation creating meaning via the interaction of the participants. Experimental semi-structured life world interviews are used as form in this study.
An epistemological question is whether the nature of interview research can lead to unbiased knowledge. As freedom from bias when studying social and cultural phenomena is not possible, it is more clarifying to use as Kvale suggests, a “reflexive objectivity” in regards to interviews as methodology (2009). That is, to strive for transparency by reflecting openly about the subjectivity of one’s exercise to produce knowledge. Qualitative research departing from a feminist position does commonly also support this view.

The informants can be categorized as elite key informant. Using key informants is common within qualitative research based on interviews, and is a mainstay of anthropological work (Ervin 2005:168-170). It is a way to obtain information from a community resident who is in the position to know the community as a whole, or a particular sector of it. A key informant is a person who is especially knowledgeable about a topic and context, presently involved, and has experience from meeting with a wider group of persons.

The advantages with the technique can help to provide different the framework shaping the work, can help overcome cultural barriers, such as class and culture. Another benefit of the method is that key informants can help refining the data collection for further interviews. Disadvantages that come with the method are that informants may give their own biases and impressions not fairly representing the informants. It may be difficult to access key informants and to choose a relevant mix of values, gender, beliefs, liaisons, etc. Persons not chosen may react upon the choice, for example resenting being left out. Representativeness with the whole community is difficult to achieve and the information may be difficult to quantify. These considerations are valid for the study. There may be leaders of Engaged Buddhism of other traditions, such as Tibetan Buddhism, or in other countries, such as China, interpreting the movement differently, thus the sampling here is not fully representative.

When interviewing informants of their views, they select what to point at and what not to point at. Their narratives are personal and time-bound, and addressed to the persona they perceive me as. An analysis of the qualitative interviews has to take this into account.

2.5.1 A cross-cultural conversation mode
None of the first informants wanted to follow my prepared and at the beginning, pre-send survey with mainly open questions. This shaped the interviews into dialogic conversations departing from their view on Buddhism instead of as suggested, on ComDev. I connect this to
a cross-cultural negotiation of what an interview is about. In order to discuss the matter, I now use examples from my primary material:

BD: “So I think you should walk hand in hand. I might know something but as a lay person, you might also experience something. You can be my teacher. This interview is a work of art of two persons, talking together. A good interview must be a work of two parties, and in that process, both actually learn and develop spiritually.”

The leaders represent both their organizations and themselves as opinion-makers. Most of them have a role as teacher. In canonical texts, Buddha often expressed views via dialogic questions and answers, and deductive reasoning. The dialogic ideal resonates with an ideal of empowerment/self-cultivation via mutual participatory exchange that every informant expressed. For example related to communication with persons considering suicide:

YO: “First we tried to educate about Buddhism in some way. But this was not a good approach. We had to change. The best is to share the problems and express compassion. It’s less top-down. And we learn a lot too.”

The final result was partly that I participated more in the conversations than planned, and that the questionnaire prepared were not responded to. I then changed into semi-experimental interviewing: sticking to some topics and partly accepting a snowballing process where arguments were introduced to the next informant and then discussed open-endedly.

2.5.2 Participatory observations

The interviews have been complemented by conversations when I participated in activities influenced by the informant’s policies. The data collected from these activities are based on more than the use of language, such as behavior and sensations. Observations from the activities have been used in the interviews with the informants, and sometimes enabling a more nuanced discussions than informants often well analyzed statements during interviews.

Deacon, Pickering, Golding and Murdock suggest three main forms of observations in mainly “natural” settings but the first could also be at used in experimental laboratories (2010:250-255): Simple observation as in being detached observer not participating but viewing without direct interaction; participant observation as in taking part to some degree in the activities being observed; and ethnography as in qualitative research involving extended observation and engagement over time. Theories and methods related to
ethnography has since its establishment been heavily discussed, such as world-views, time necessary for it to be called ethnography, or space, as will addressed below.

Participant observation is a common feature of qualitative research and is intended to generate more information and data that would be possible without participation (Deacon, Pickering, Golding & Murdock 2010:250). It has been used here in all five countries in parallel with the key interviews, in order to indicatively understand programming and practices related to the informant’s policy communication.

My approach has primarily been to participate in activities and in life-style of not necessarily the informant, but the organization. Guided by a person selected by the informant, I have contributed to work, participated in preparing and delivering food to homeless, gardened, cleaned premises, discussed result-based management with a team of management, experienced rituals, meals, and talked with participants involved in the work: one-to-one as a rule, with exception of one group-interview. I have either used a non-professional translator or English, but the participatory observations have also been performed by other forms of communication.

The time for participant observations have been limited, as in four to ten full days regarding half of the informants, and for the other less time (see Appendix 1). The latter primarily perform activities in development modes familiar to me beforehand, while I have never spend days before by within Buddhist temples or monasteries. I therefore spend more time in such settings. I also spend ten days partly volunteering with advice to SJs Sadhana Institute on result-based management while doing research, then “offering a token of reciprocity to justify my intrusion”, to use Deacon, Pickering, Golding and Murdock wordings regarding such work (2007:251).

2.5.3 Multi-sited study

What is then the value of hopping between countries visiting several actors, compare to study one actor in depth? The collection of primary research material on this non-denominational lose movement not defined by geography or by Buddhist traditions (King 2009:1), has been guided by multi-sited ethnography addressing this question. The term “multi-sited” work mode of ethnography is commonly referred to Marcus 1995 when he promoted a mode of work less explored than the principal mode that “preserves the intensively-focused-upon single site of ethnographic observation and participation” (p95). The multi-sited mode moves out from “the single sites and local situations”, implying in practice a multitude of languages.
and to use the time planned differently, with implications on the research. At the heart of the
design is to “literally following connections, associations and putative relationships” (p97).

When describing its suggested benefit, Cook, Laidlaw and Mair (2009:47) exemplify with the Tittha Sutta (Thanissaro Bhikkhu 2012). It describes how blind people were introduced to an elephant, and called to describe what it was. The blind had access to only one part each, the head, tail, body, foot, hindquarter, ear or trunk. They consequently gave very different suggestions, and heavily questioned the other’s views. The Buddhist parable is used to present that multi-sited method was promoted to enable an understanding of how local sites are influenced by a world system crossing geographical boundaries, and that the knowledge of the world is deepened when studying the traffic and expressions at different sites. Cook, Laidlaw and Mair embrace the method yet criticize the underlying assumption on an existing comprehensive system that will be revealed. As described in 2.3, Buddhism is diverse and recently collated as one religion not to be addressed as a monolithic system of ideas. They also join the many researchers addressing that multi-country or multi-sited work mode has been in use since long time, not at least reflected in a rich body of literature on religion (p51).

The typical, traditional mode of ethnography is described as seeing the world as a set of local particular pieces making a puzzle, a whole. My approach to Engaged Buddhism is not as a unified culture (or sub-culture) but to identify policy discourses transgressing boundaries despite the lack of unified doctrines, cultures and programming.

Critique has been raised against the multi-sited mode, such as the lack of time for observational studies of one place, a core asset for enabling the depth of knowledge often associated with ethnography (Falzon 2009:6-9). My study is no doubt based on shorter periods of participatory observations and limited time for interviewing. However, the material has been studied and repeatedly processed over a long period of time (see 2.1). This extensive engagement with transcriptions and literature has enabled a much more qualified and verified understanding of the statements than otherwise.

In ethnography, time transforms and makes, Falzon writes (p8). He nevertheless suggests that space also transforms and makes. Instead of “to know a people by knowing a place”, traffic or various places could be entry-points to understanding people. I support this view as I had missed out on important knowledge had I only studied one group or two. The last site for field-work for example, the women monastery of BD, had not been understood
deep enough if I hadn’t experienced others. I could now identify the unusual amount of varied symbols manifesting her intra-religious perspective, and identify perspectives on self-transformation put forward by uncommon work practices.

2.6 Discourse analysis
As part of the mixed method approach, I have partly implemented basic discourse analysis. In Chapter 3, I present scholars’ description of Engaged Buddhism and analyze how this is reflected or contested from my primary material from several sites in particular, but also from analysis of culture. I therefore include discursive practices of words and symbols assumed to construct social worlds, organized for example as patterns of shared meanings within cultural and social structures. In Chapter 4, the programming assumingly influenced by the shared meanings is thematically analyzed from mode of action and target groups, and not from discourse analysis.

Discourse can be described as an order that is linguistically and culturally specific and makes it possible for “subjects who have been socialized under its authority to speak and act together” and narratives constitutes part of discourses (Rinker 2009:123). The underpinning ontology do not as critical realism, put interest into investigations of the existing world but focus only on the knowledge that can be produced when regarding the world as changing and constructed by social interpretations (Phillips & Winter Jørgensen 1999). Discourse analysis is used to study how action is given meaning and how identities are produced in language use (Hjelm 2014:134). Theoretically, it connects to the interpretive tradition of social constructionism which is not my theoretical base for this research. Critical realism seeks to identify how existing cultural and social systems impose limits, and I then argue that is relevant to both map the system of meaning and system of religious organization that informants relate and refer to.

All descriptions of the world is within discourse analysis by definition partial, yet indicators of social life as specific patterns are appearing in specific social areas. The same religious beliefs and practices can for some be the way to salvation and to others evil depending on the discourses that social groups employ (2014:135). Discourse analysis relies on the idea that our statements of the world expressed by language are structured in patterns, and that these patterns is a social practice that has a function. It can contribute to both social reproduction and change.
Consequently, the words, story-telling techniques, visuals and perspectives convey meaning via discursive practices that can be formed into patterns and shared understanding. Key concepts from a perspective of critical discourse analysis are ideology, here understood as shared meaning in the service of power. The peak of ideology is hegemony, the point when all alternative meanings are suppressed in favor of one dominating view. Other concepts in use here are, nodes, meaning points where a set of frequently appeared phenomena, signs, make up a categories such as karma, compassion, dualism, non-identity, the national sangha (Buddhist community often of monks and sometimes nuns included), capitalism et cetera. A discourse always relates to what is ignored or not expressed. Finally, the researcher makes statements on the discourse therefore reflections are needed on how the researcher makes these statements from its subjective position.

Discourse analysis is commonly used in combination with other methods. In ethnographic studies, it can be used as a mean to study cultural norms, then by using ethnographic material as texts possible to “read”. While discursive studies of the field of development are not rare, Hjelm argues that the field of religion has been little studied from this method (2014:134), and suggests that there are areas where the method is particular relevant in particular in combination with other methods such as anthropological approaches. Such areas are for example the emerging field of religion and social problems, representations of religion in media, and studies on how religious identities are being socially constructed (2014:144).

Discourse analysis is firstly used here to analyze qualitative data. My primary sources, transcriptions and field diaries, are approached from this method but themes are organized in a basic generic sense therefore without advanced schemas or lengthy reporting from all concepts commonly included. Secondly, the method is used to analyze how scholars in literature suggest that Engaged Buddhism is accomplished discursively, related to the informants statement, and how the informants discursively suggest that approaches to development programming connects to Buddhism primarily, but not only. The analysis interacts between the particular and the broad. My use of discourse analysis is as such related to methods of culture analysis.

The analysis is both pursuing a perspective of interaction and critical discourse analysis interested in negotiated power. However, when I later explicitly discuss perspectives on power, I depart from their suggested organizational action without analyzing it
discursively. Instead, the organizational programming is linked to central themes from primarily normative theories shaping development programming, and compared conceptually at macro-level.

### 2.6.1 Identified dominant themes

The second research stage as described in 2.1 was performed as analysing informants’ statements related to a catalogue of common nodes of meaning:

1. Definitions of Engaged Buddhism
2. Structural perspective on society
3. Liberation from oppressors now and then
4. Repression by powers
5. Suggested misinterpretations of the authentic Buddhism
6. Buddha as teacher
7. How to interpret
8. On conversion, evangelsim, inter-faith and intra-faith
9. On anger, struggle, truth, Eightfold path
10. On karma as action, merit
11. Dialogic conversation preference
12. Dialogue enabling empowerment
13. Right Speech

Consequently, the nodes are identified from both Buddhist and development terminology.

### 2.7 Ethics, reliability and validity

The reliability can be referred to the multiple methods used, the inter-disciplinary readings and the level of interaction with many actors as presented in Appendix 1. A main weakness is the small and, for the subject, conventional group of informants. The reliability is strengthened by the practice of writing a book first, for example as impressions have been processed thoroughly and misunderstandings have been corrected which benefits this study.

English was used most of the time which is the mother tongue of none of us which implies a limited scale of expressions has been available. The translators I could employ when needed to, in particular in Japan and Sri Lanka, were not professional which challenge the correctness of the wordings and also limited the time for talking. This made the interviews less reliable compared to conversations in a shared mother tongue. The weakness is mitigated by particularly careful use of statements.

The validity is not high from a perspective that it can’t be repeated by another researcher with the same result. The findings are drawn from a diverse primary material and from interpretations of broad secondary material. However, creating repeatable results
independently of researcher is less relevant for this exploratory approach of qualitative research assuming a level of interaction and negotiated understandings between actors. Trust in the findings is instead established by the argumentation and presentation. The researcher is then to some extent the instrument, demanding a reflexive argumentation.

My primary data has been collected both through formal interviews with key informants where eight out of nine have been successfully recorded, and through informal interviews during participatory observations and spontaneous meetings without recorder.

This research design has not been discussed in an ethics committee, but I do not find that I have acted conflicting with for example the Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice, by the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth (2011:1-10). Four areas are often addressed in ethical guidelines for research (Kvale 2009:68-70): Informed consent, consequences, confidentiality, and the role of the researcher.

**Informed consent:** All informants had the opportunity to read my formal questions in advance. The agreement around each interview followed the code-of-conduct of ethical journalism: we agreed upon that they should be able to read the relevant book-text afterwards and that I would correct mistakes. The informants did not sign written consent or agreements with me, something that I regret as it would have made the arrangement clearer. It could be argued that they are elite informants and as such assumed to be used to being subject for researchers opinions. Further, as indicated earlier, they share the understanding of conversations being subjective. Further, they have accepted to participate without constraints, in a publication with aim to be read by more people than this thesis.

**Confidentiality:** I have made sure not to expose secondary informants in this study.

The informants are persons scrutinized by adversaries. Given the well-documented closing space for activists and CSOs as a result of more repressive states, I have chosen to include only a selected transcription in Appendix 3 as example, and other transcriptions are not stored online.

**The role of the researcher:** When asking the informant’s about the interview, I explained that the aim was a book on Engaged Buddhism based on ComDev perspectives, that I had a fair understanding of Buddhism but the mainstream Swedes have less knowledge in average and probably never heard of the subject, and that I as my day-job work with the issue at Sida. First
when meeting, I raised that I was studying and the book was part of a Degree Project as well. This was downplayed at first contact as I assumed it would confuse the aim, a book.

My position as professional development worker granted me a feeling of being levelled up to their knowledge and expertise. As interviewer out of my own context and out of the Swedish culture, I came with limited knowledge on Buddhism, their culture and its possibilities of societal change. Some of the informants have over 50 years of experience from social work, political advocacy, teaching and management of organizations. I could not match their experience, but I was neither inexperienced of the work they have lived through. I think it may have enabled me to pose more critical questions than if not, as colleagues can do rather than when one that is being studied by another.

It can’t be excluded that my position at Sida made some actors more interested to see me and possible adapted their responses to this. I mitigated the risk by explicitly state that I had no possibilities within my position and organization to grant them funds – which I still don’t – and then consciously avoided talking about it. No informant asked me about Sida-grants.

SS, SCK and ATA knew about Sida as former recipients of support. At the time for the field-work did Sida allocate funds via the Swedish Pentecostal CSO Diakonia to organizations connected to SS and ATA, but they were not aware of this link.

Consequences: From the above, I find that possible risks for the informants are mitigated by agreements and preparations. They will have a fair chance to influence my book-script when translated. The thesis makes arguments about them to a far lesser extent and it will of course be available as well, but after the examination.
3. THEMATIC ENGAGEMENT WITH RELIGIOUS ACTORS

This section first frames religious actors related to relevant aspects shaping the social and cultural structures of the development industry, then reviews literature on Engaged Buddhism.

The literature on development practices in this study draws from three main secondary sources: scholarly literature from primarily fields of political and social research; applied research with clear referencing; and normative documents guiding targeted practitioners. The latter are selected from its normative status where UN and EU organizations are assessed as structurally most influential within international development cooperation. The guidance documents are normative and contextually related to a specific organization at a certain time. These sources are commonly but not only a product of applied research and organizational politics, with the pragmatic aim to delimit and influence transformative action in certain, but often broad and general, directions. Theories and the research underpinning these contemporary normative tools are very little studied by scholars so far except for in the applied research.

3.1 Structural conditioning of religious actors within development cooperation

Chapter 1 discussed social and cultural conditioning of religion within the development structures over time. This section will frame religious actors from contemporary practices commonly in use.

The arguments in donor guidelines and alike for active inclusion of religious aspects in development are not dominantly thematic norms, such as statues in various global or regional human rights instruments like Article 18 in UDHR on the right to religion and belief. Instead, religious ideas, practices and organizations are highlighted as cultural parameters influencing development and realization of other human rights, such as women’s right to livelihood, bodily safety and participation in public life. Equaling religion with culture, UNFPA further argues that: “There is need to reformulate the premises of development paradigms to increase the local ownership of development programmes. Adopting culturally sensitive policies and practices does not entail making positive or negative value judgements /…/. Culturally sensitive approaches can be applied to understand social practices that are harmful to people and hinder their enjoyment of human rights.” (2004:2).

Such instrumental approach to religion within the cultural structures of major development donors is both criticized as too narrow, in particular by actors and scholars of
religion such as Jones and Juul Pedersen, and endorsed by their peers arguing that development interventions by default are motivated from its instrumental value.

A number of positive instrumental characteristics are usually associated with faith-based organizations: a long term and widespread presence even in remote villages, a high degree of recognition, support and legitimacy in the population, extensive networks and relations and the ability to mobilize funds and resources (Danish Institute for Human Rights 2014:2). Further, interfaith activities in a desired direction are commonly identified as important to influence societies, for example related to sexual and reproductive rights and minority rights, as well as intra-faith activities for goals such as peace or environmental concerns. Common arguments presented by advocates are that religious experience is transformative, empowering and also protected by various Human Rights instruments such as Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UDHR (United Nations 1948).

A growing body of research on religion and development has emerged partly in response to donors’ initiatives as described in the Introduction, according to Jones & Juul Petersen (2011:1296). They argue that much research then takes an instrumental approach, asking whether religious resources could be “relevant for development”, which is understandable, but are concerned about how this shape academic research. They further criticize the body of research for a narrow view on formalized religious actors engaged in development work and suggest researcher to study how religion influences other organizations including secular ones. Thirdly, they find research on religion and development promoting positive normative assumptions on religion, such as better and more authentic than other forms of social action (2011:1299).

Religious leaders

Religious leaders are commonly identified as key figures assumed to influence behaviours and attitudes, relate directly to power structures, to allied and sometimes to adversary pressure groups (UNFPA 2008:10). Leaders are commonly described as change agents with possibility to legitimize a development objective in their community.

The informants of this study are leaders with varied degree of religious legitimacy, from high-level monastics with recognition globally, to Buddhists Dalit lay-persons, and others with a status in between on a scale, such as A.T.Ariyaratne, lay-person
recognized as prominent teacher of Buddhist action. "Teacher" can however convey spiritual legitimacy. Buddha is often referred to as teacher with exceptional insight.

3.1.1 CSO, NGO or FBO?
Engaged Buddhism is commonly described as a religious movement, and/or as a social movement. Engaged Buddhism is here understood as a social movement. Such movements are according to Crossley commonly defined as collective action run by non-state agents, sharing the same beliefs, and perform sustained activities over time (not just one action of protest) (Crossley 2002:3-12). They depart from frustration of social order and movements differ from each other in structure and work mode. Crossley identifies that a definition of social movements from the 1990s stated that actors confronts “elites, authorities and opponents” (p5). He argues that contemporary movements also struggle against more abstract targets not as easy to identify this way, such as “patriarchy” or “institutionalized racism”. Later sections describe how Engaged Buddhism address “suffering”.

Within the social and cultural structure of contemporary development cooperation, organizations are assessed by donors from the applicants addressed topics, target groups, capacity and approaches to programming, but also from their financial and organizational management. The informants represent a wide range of organizations: nongovernmental organizations, social ventures, banking, networks, associations and independent monastic bodies. I use the wide concept “civil society organization” (CSO) when defining the organizations of the study as they vary in character and are unified not by legal status but by not being tied to public actors such as state or the national Buddhist organization. This enables comparisons with values on operational modes of other CSOs. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is a sub-section to CSOs connected to international legal standards.

CSOs are in international development cooperation positioned as a specific section of representation next to representatives of the public or the private sectors, and as such actors exercising power. Lewis concludes that CSOs and NGOs are recognized as "key third sector actors on the landscapes of development, human rights, humanitarian action, environment, and many other areas of public action" (2010:1056). Tallberg, Dellmuth, Agné and Duit describe a mutual exchange of information between 400 studied NGOs and international organizations such as EU or UN, and find many similarities with actors influencing policy within national political arenas (2015:3). The informants of this study work locally mainly relating to national powers but also to international organizations.
The category faith-based organization (FBOs) is compared to CSO/NGO often preferred by advocates’ for religion in development. FBOs can by tradition follow legal structures for charities, temples or spiritual organizations with different standards regarding decision-making levels and transparent financial management. Accepting the FBO-label means accepting their management culture. However, the development industry structurally prefer specific standards on financial openness and well-structured participatory decision-levels over organizational modes enabling confidentiality of finances and structures uplifting a guru-like leader.

Jones and Juul Petersen promote the FBO-category from a thematic perspective, criticizing the use of CSO as a mainstream position within the structural realm “development industry”, and that the dominant power of donors makes religious actors reshape their work and possibly lose relevant dimensions (2011:1297). Not rejecting this view, I note that critique of an inclusive donor category is constantly raised by thematic actors, such as media specialists: When included in a donor’s CSO-portfolio as opposed to an exclusive media-portfolio, certain objectives and actors will be prioritized over others. The rationale behind few large, inclusive sectors can partly be explained by major donor’s increased ambitions to coordinate the work, such as OECD-DAC-member’s standards on aid-effectiveness from 2005.

FBO is further not a homogenous concept. Various typologies are suggested today by researchers. I have assessed these typologies as less relevant for the research objective. McDuie-Ra and Rees instead use “religious actors” when analyzing the World Banks engagement as they find FBOs commonly described as too homogenous (2008:3). They argue that varied politics of FBOs are rarely articulated, and standpoints for or against a development agenda is downplayed.

A visualization of the types discussed without accurate reference to numbers:
3.1.2 Evangelism
The selection criteria (2.4) of this study relate to one communication aim included in most FBO-typologies: mobilizing new adherents, or evangelism. There is no well-established framework for monitoring evangelism and its potential implications, nor for defining it. I understand it as promoting a religious moral worldview and practices that refers to an assumed cosmological power. All informants state that the social activities are not missionary activities in order to win people over. This conflicts with the repeated interest in mobilizing participants to understand their Buddhist view on society, and act from this. I will now discuss evangelism by examples from the informants.

Buddhist organizations that address sociopolitical issues marked by evangelistic ambitions exist and have existed historically. For example, The Japanese Soka Gakkai has expanded by using such targeted activities in USA (Chapell 2000:187). Most Buddhists in India today are Dalit originating from mass-conversions in late 1950s by B.R. Ambedkar. The informant working in his tradition explains them as an empowering liberation act from unhuman discrimination of Dalit’s related to Hindu identities. But she rejects conversions today despite the political changes it may have contributed to, and address that people suffer psychologically from the process:

SJ: “They change the religion - but what happens after a while when they realize that the expected change of the society comes slowly, that it was harder than they thought? It is not sure that those converting people are there for those who feel uncomfortable after a while. It doesn’t seem so to me.”

Except for SJ, informants act in cultures marked by forms of Buddhism. They welcome that people may be attracted to the value-base from their actions, but see it rather from an intra-faith perspective negotiating meanings compared to the mainstream contextual interpretations.

SS “I think the Buddha would be the first to deny evangelism because in our tradition a man is not allowed to preach unless invited. It’s against the rules. So evangelism in a Buddhist context is that you practice the teachings of the Buddha and then if they like your way of living they will be influenced by your way of living. Only then, if they are interested, you can help them with the essence of the teachings. If you go out and tell how wonderful the Buddha is, I think that is just worse than selling Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola.”
Development work is by nature never free from values and convictions. A challenge for further studies is to enable comparisons with other ideologies. Secular CSOs are marked by a social interest based on moral values such as interpretations of the Human Rights. As raised above by Juul Pedersen, values promoted by secular actors are rarely studied. Hopgood has among the few drawn attention to some of the ways a secular CSO, Amnesty International, cultivate a sense of faith in its mission (Hopgood 2006 cited in Marshall 2011:115). He argued in “Keepers of flame” that a secular form of orthodoxy, piety and evangelism is stressed which is comparable with the functions of a church.

In order to critically discuss the dominant social and cultural structures FBOs relate to, Tönnessen has explored various work modes that Norwegian FBO can have in practice (2007:340). Common negative assumptions is according to him that FBOs social work per se serves as vehicle for the main purpose of evangelism, and that FBOs helping others tend to focus on adherents and proselytism (only helped if converting). Recognizing that this can occur, and that evangelism has varied expressions, he argues that FBOs, given their mandate, commonly perform development work from different modes, and employ staff with other beliefs. He further argues that there are non-religious development actors with tendencies of exclusion and proselytism.

**Conclusion:**

The informant’s do not advocate or subscribe to conversion of non-adherents, and evangelism is not an aim. But given the vagueness of the concept in practice, advocating for a specific interpretation and mode of organizing can be perceived as (intra-faith) evangelism. Further, the informants both gladly teach their view on Buddhism to non-adherents and also practice the teaching-principle “show don’t tell” suggested by SS above, also at play within evangelistic practices. A most relevant topic for further studies would be to see how the expressed position against evangelism is perceived in practice.

### 3.2 Introduction to Buddhism

Buddhism is a major world religion with adherents primarily in Asia. It starts off from the suggested teachings of in particular one historical man from the nobility of a state in northern India almost 2500 years before our time (Prebish and Keown 2010). After various efforts as adult, he reached the state of “awakening” and could then unveil the correct insight on how the world and humans are functioning, the dharma. The Buddha, meaning the Awakened, also managed to teach dharma to other humans during approximately 50 years thus establishing
what is called Buddhism today. After his death were 18 schools established. The present two main ones results from diverse historical processes: the pluralistic Theravada and Mahayana. Tibetan Buddhism is either described as part of the latter, or described as a separate tradition, Vajrayana. The interpretations of the Dalai Lama are hence not valid or recognized by all Buddhist traditions. The Buddha is further not the key object within all traditions or schools. The Japanese informants for example refer primarily to other Buddhas, or to Bodhisattvas.

Buddhism is commonly called a non-theistic religion, and does not have one cohesive holy text as reference but a vast material of guiding texts and interpretations. The collection of texts that was first documented in written form was done so by monks 4-500 years after the Buddha’s death. Buddhism was not called by this name until consolidated by educated Europeans in the nineteenth century (Cook, Laidlaw & Mair 2009:52). Various strands of practices in a vast area were then suggested to be part of the same tradition. Today, scholars of Buddhism make sure to emphasis that traditions are varied, not offering a single holistic concept to use for comparing deviations.

3.3 Engaged Buddhism in literature
Literature on Engaged Buddhism can be divided into three main groups: 1) Activists own interesting writings in English such as Thich Nhat Hanhs many texts from the mid-1960s and onwards. All informants with more than 20 years of activism relates to this group (four out of nine). 2) Assumed relevant literature in local Asian languages, therefore inaccessible to me. 3) Literature in English primarily produced by scholars of religion or philosophy from the US or UK. This group have commonly specific knowledge of either Theravada or Mahayana Buddhism although this is not expressed but can shape their terminology and focus. Engaged Buddhism is commonly explained from why, and what, but more rarely from how related to development cooperation practices. This literature is marked by summarized descriptions of activities and claimed results but not critical comparisons with other social activist’s work.

Engaged Buddhism is so far little but increasingly studied. Main and Lai presented 2013 a review of dominant discourses within scholarly literature, as editors and contributors to a special feature of the highly regarded publication The Eastern Buddhist (44/2:1-34). They use the term Socially Engaged Buddhists, a term equalled with Engaged Buddhists for the aims and scholars discussed here. Scholar-activists and others began according to their review to pay close attention to the social activities of modern Buddhist individuals and groups, in the last decades of the twentieth century. Works from 1996 by
Queen and King are noted as starting points according to Main and Lai. All key scholars according to them are key references to this study as well, next to Harvey on ethics, and Watts on social justice and Japanese activism. They all agree with Deitrick that the interventions of Engaged Buddhists are contextual Buddhist responses to modernizing influences and thus share traits and concerns despite actors having limited knowledge of each other (2010:310-312).

Sallie B. King describes that (Socially) Engaged Buddhism refers to a post-war worldwide movement of all Buddhist traditions expressing the ideals in non-violent practical action (2009). Even though Buddhism has been influencing societies since the days of the historical man called Buddha almost 2500 years ago, the term Engaged Buddhism was introduced in English in the 1960s partly in response to formalistic and state-supportive mainstream Buddhism and partly to the many horrors revealed by local misery, increased global exchange and media coverage. Actors engage actively, yet nonviolently with the social, political, economic and ecological problems of society - not without critique from other Buddhists. Watts and Okano further describe how Engaged Buddhism started before 1900 and first coincided with nationalist movements against western colonization, then with anti-war movements and pro-democracy movements (2012:247).

Famous leaders often mentioned are the late Dalit leader B.R Ambedkar who drafted the constitution of India and then mass-converted Dalits to liberate them from inferior positions referred to Hindu culture, the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh who mobilized support for boat-refugees and negotiated for peace in the 1960s and 70s, and the social and political work of the 14th Dalai Lama exiled from Tibet. They all represent different Buddhist nominations. Four of the study’s nine informants are represented in King 2009 (ATA, SS, BD and SCK indirectly), and in Deitrick 2010.

3.3.1 Introduction to the analysis related to literature
As the dominant scholarly work on Engaged Buddhism stems from scholars of religion, I critically reflect key thematic features in this section from perspectives of development studies in order to point at an understanding from additional perspectives. I discuss how scholars in literature suggest that Engaged Buddhism is accomplished, related to the informants statement, and how the informants suggest that approaches to development programming connects to Buddhism.
This means that secondary material, the literature, is reflected from the findings of my primary sources, my interviews and participatory observation. I clearly state when this is the case. This unconventional way of presenting and discussing my findings aims at enabling a thematic structure without having to frequently repeat connections which would make the text less accessible. As this is an inter-disciplinary study, discussing and relating to different perspectives from themes that can be argued to be interrelated poses certain challenges related to space and readability.

3.4 Cultural conditioning
In this section, I depart from key strands in literature related to Engaged Buddhism, and reflect this from findings in my primary material. The discourses suggested in the literature is in addition reflected from a critical realist perspective. My conclusion is that by relating discourses to contextual changing events in the world, and to studies of strategic action and programming, a different understanding of Engaged Buddhism can be suggested.

Informants commonly suggest contextual dominant meanings that they support or question. When deconstructing meanings they mostly refer to interpretations of canonical texts, such as on ethics. “Ethics” is here used broadly, answering the questions “how should one live”, and “what actions are assumed as good”. The informants however often avoid the use of “good” or “bad”, and express it as “skillful” related to their view on Buddha’s teachings, dharma.

Compassion

Compassion is a central feature that all informant highlight as guiding principle motivating their action, and it is identified in literature as central. For example, compassion is identified as underlying ideal when Buddhists link the Human Rights to Buddhism (Prebish & Keown 2010:228-229). Yet it is also a contested concept as it has been used for motivating war and even murder historically as described in Jerryson and Juergensmeyer 2010. It can indeed mean different things.

Umberto Eco describes in “How culture conditions the color we see” the confusion in Italy following that rat and mouse being called the same word in Italian (1996:148). Similarly, Buddhist concepts with many meanings are translated into not completely corresponding words in English. “Compassion” shall as example be understood as central for Buddhist ethics - as for many ideologies - but is here among others commonly
connected to a set of perspectives (*brahmanaviharas*) each represented by a separate word in Pali/Sanskrit (Prebish & Keown 2010:105). Three of the informants this argue that Buddhist compassion in development generally is more horizontal and oriented towards listening to, and encouraging participation from, a subject: “not pity or spoon-feeding”. This interpretation of compassion implies a participatory and equal notion and is presented by the informants as different from compassion expressed by both other religious actors and non-religious development actors guided by concepts such as “serving God” or “showing solidarity”. Further studies could be to investigate this view comparatively.

*Metaphors and symbols*

A feature of the movement according to King is to use a problem analysis template based on the Four Noble Truths of the Buddha’s first lesson, identifying the “causes of decline and decay” as stated earlier by Aung San Suu Kyi. The programming template identify 1) the suffering/problems in focus, 2) the reason for its origin, 3) what can make the suffering cease, and 4) the chosen way forward to enable liberation from this problem. “Suffering” conveys meanings of mental, physical, emotional, material and spiritual needs.

From studying interviews, program material and websites, I support this view as all informants communicate this template organically without much ado about it. Further, many Buddhist symbols are integrated in the work but not always possible to identify without contextual experience. The Bodhi Tree under which Buddha sat when awakening, is a symbol used within programming as mentioned in 2.2. related to systemic analysis (see the cover). But systemic charts or planning trees are used by non-Buddhists as well.

*Discourses on politics*

Engaged Buddhists are often referred to as leftist on a secular conventional political scale according to Main and Lai (2013:2). They connect this to that the subjects identified by most scholars live in political contexts supportive of this perspective. From reading the autobiographies and talking to the subjects, I question the leftist label as a general rule. Firstly, changing society implies levels of discontentment with the present. Informants live today in countries ruled by consumerist-focussed and growth-oriented (often Buddhist) politicians, commonly right-wing or authoritarian inviting little popular participation. Nationalism and politics of ethnicity is common.
Green values are in contrast central for all informants. Green is still often equalled with leftist in many countries. The older informants rather relate environmental concerns to traditional rural values. Well-fare for all is central to the informants, but is an ideal that can be, as the example of Sweden and Canada, promoted both from left or right. Informants label a level of well-fare for all as Buddhist based on a variety of concepts (equality, greed as suffering, ethics of do-no-harm and inter-connectedness et cetera), and further avoid connection to political parties.

Secondly, scholars of religion suggest that the traditional scale of left-right can be less relevant for understanding religious actors as they can critically address political shortcomings regarding climate change, migration, poverty, gender equality et cetera independently of the ruling party (Zachariasson 2013:56).

Thirdly, the informants relate to a variety of thinkers but in the western literature, less than a handful is repeated - such as the eclectic Buddhadasa Bhikkhu mostly described only as leftist.

In conclusion, when addressing political perspectives, a focus on activities performed in relation to the complexity of change over time and place in history gives another understanding than knowledge created from interpretation of texts.

**Self-cultivation and self-transformation**

In contrast to scholarly work in search of understanding all specific aspects in the correct manner, analyzing actors within the development industry means commonly to depart from generic and broad categories possible to make comparisons from despite shifting contexts. I assess that from a development cooperation perspective, most types of development topics addressed by Engaged Buddhist are addressed by other CSOs as well.

Action by Engaged Buddhists seems however to be marked by an integrated self-reflexive imperative connected to ideals of self-cultivation that is not the mainstream mode of CSO programming. Central features are not only what to address, but also how to do it based on a rich framework of moral principles. As example, Right Action and Right View are multi-dimensional central Buddhist virtues within the central moral guideline Noble Eightfold Path. The ethics of do-no-harm, moderate behavior, non-judgmentalism, and non-adversiality influence these activist’s to try to act gently, avoid seeing the opponent as the Bad Other, yet act principled for the cause (King: 2009:32-33). A contrasting example is Hopper, a
European scholar on globalization, who argues that a global culture can’t be created without an opponent, without an “other” (2007:108).

Ethics of self-cultivation and self-transformation have been central to all main schools of Buddhism, according to the social-anthropologists Cook, Laidlaw and Mair (2009:49). They boldly state that while other traditions practice self-cultivation, “in none more so than in Buddhism”. An increased traffic of Buddhist self-cultivating practices is noted across ideological and national boundaries, including practices of meditation, mindfulness, “life-style” and psychological therapy. This traffic has according to them been accompanied by innovations in forms of religious organization, authority, and participation in public civil and social life. Their forthcoming research on self-cultivation includes social action and Engaged Buddhism (Cambridge University n.d.).

Both my interviews and the participatory observations show an organizational imperative with the ambition to enable individuals to reflect actively on how they act and think. Individual reflections is encouraged and made time for as part of the on-going implementation of the programming. In some organizations, activists are encouraged to meditate or do mindfulness-practices related to the discussions. This social and cultural imperative guiding the sampling-unit can according to me be connected to later analysis of communication culture and targeting of invisible forms of power.

Further, the frequency and nature of self-cultivation practices differ very much between the organizations. Meditation practices are in particular identified in my primary material as a water-shed practice. Meditation (not to be equaled with mindfulness practices) was not integrated within the daily or weekly work by non-monastic organizations, in contrast to ideals communicated by in particular activities deriving from policies communicated by the monastics SCK and BD.

_intra-faith negotiations of authenticity and engagement_

Commonly according to the literature, this process of deconstruction of Buddhism’s hybridity of signs such as symbols, texts, organization and practices by Engaged Buddhist’s are aimed at intra-religious positioning and to question a suggested dominant hierarchal culture where monastics only, primarily men, are Buddhist legitimate representatives and not laypeople. It can be regarded as a means to mobilize people and as such reform the suggested contextual mainstream Buddhism and their social and cultural structures.
In their review of themes and discourses in literature on Engaged Buddhism, Main and Lai identify arguments on religious authenticity of the mainly non-sectarian interpretations, as central for Engaged Buddhists according to scholars. This means that they challenge strong social and cultural structures of national power relating to a specific national tradition of Theravada or Mahayana Buddhism. Aspects related to authenticity of the non-denominational take on Buddhism are repeatedly communicated in the material.

ATA: "Buddha’s first lesson was to tell us to respect all forms of life, he explains clearly and carefully.” (Shortened.) "(Then) he simply called for compassion for all sentient beings in his first lesson. Not only for oneself. That is the message of Buddha as I see it. Eventually Buddha developed these two themes in various ways through the 82 000 addresses that he delivered during his 45 years of teaching on Earth.”

Main and Lai argue discursively that Engaged Buddhists as a rule raise their approaches, such as non-sectarian social action, as authentic to Buddhism and then implying that other views are wrong. I do not find that mainstreamed in my material. Informants rather see their social action as complementary and marginalized to other forms of Buddhism. My conclusion is that their indeed repeated argumentation on authenticity partly can be connected to opposing nationalistic perspectives on Buddhism, and national religious structures of power legitimizing nationalism, and partly to me being a Westerner. Their forms of social action are in the West rarely connected to Buddhism.

The term Engaged Buddhists is questioned by many adhering to its principles, from the point that Buddhists monastics always have engaged themselves with the society (King 2009, my primary material). They then argue from authenticity again, but also from the common stereotyping o Buddhism as passive and introvert only. The term further suggests a dualistic understanding of Buddhism as passive in society as oppose to informant’s superior alternative, a divisive argumentation of which the sampling unit unanimously express frustration over.

SS: “Socially Engaged Buddhism may seem new in the West but for us, the concept has always been around. Buddha’s ethics according to the Eightfold Path: Right Speech, Right Action and Right View as way of living. It’s about doing it useful to others. We are all connected and equal. The words are just new.”
Main and Lai in contrast highlight that scholars (as Queen 2000) commonly write that Engaged Buddhists’ work and reinterpret dharma in novel ways (2013:9). The informants all rejected such view. In line with all the scholars mentioned in 3.3, the informants all argue that dharma in its essence can be used for contemporary challenges and they advocate that this demand contemporary contextual understandings. They all express that dharma has been contextualized in all times, hence their activism is an authentic practice.

Engaged Buddhism in Japan as quite differently organized and targeted compared to Thailand and Sri Lanka, thus indicating country-specific meanings and modes of Engaged Buddhism that connects to their views on mainstream forms of Buddhism (Watts & Okano 2012:258). For the Japanese informants, addressing new target groups and introducing new modes of working is central for deconstructing negative views of Buddhist representatives in Japan that they do not find authentic to Buddhism.

YO: “I think that this entire system with temples can disappear. It would be okay for me. Most priests have been more or less forced into the profession. “

However, in a later section I connect methods used with the early alternative paradigm of development. Watts and Okano also points at novelty related to actions, suggesting that Japanese priests are using new types of events such as concerts, bazaars and flea markets (2012:358). In conclusion, discourses suggesting that Engaged Buddhism are a new form of Buddhism is not communicated by the informants even if scholars have suggested this. When departing from knowledge on activity approaches at a specific time in history (and not knowledge generated from interpretation of meaning) action performed by informants’ organizations could indicatively be described as new forms of development action.

3.4.1 Karma as social action
The literature highlights karma as central concept. Karma is in literature explained as the consequence of a deliberate act (Harvey 2002: 15-17, Watts 2009b:23). The word karma in Sanskrit literally means action or work. Such action is something that is carried out with intention through body, speech and mind and is, in theory, not as in Hinduism closely connected to performing rituals. (Watts 2009b:24). However, there is no uniform doctrine for how the regulatory system of karma works accepted by all Buddhist schools. King means that Engaged Buddhists negotiate mainstream understandings of karma in respective society, such as Aung San Suu Kyi (2009:161). She has challenged the usual faith in the country that is
strongly influenced by Hinduism, with meanings justifying the military regime. To renegotiate the meaning of the word karma has according to King been a part of her mental resistance policy.

Watts has collected activist’s writings on karma related to social justice and the texts are convincingly describing the hybridity of influences referred to meanings of karma (2009). He suggest a dominant view within Buddhism “The common understanding of karma often serves to perpetuate structural and cultural violence underpinning the more visible acts of violence and oppression.”

I find that the informants challenge what they appropriate to a mainstream paradigm of meaning related to karma as a system of superhuman justice correcting diverse weaknesses of humans over several lives. Instead, informants raise karma as intentional action in this life with effects here and now, and with possible instrumental effects for future generations. Karma has been discussed with me as political, sociological and biological conditions.

BD: “My future karma, I decide now. So Buddhists are not restricted by past karma. It only brought you here. But the future is yours. So we are not fatalistic in that sense. We always decide of our future from now, here.”

Regarding her work for equal respect, legal status and spiritual legitimacy of female monks/bhikkunis in Thailand, Bhikkuni Dhammananda says:

BD: “Because by explaining with karma you are actually encouraging more structural violence.”

However, this can be regarded as a policy stance that is negotiated at individual level. Understandings of karma seems according to my participatory observation be perceived as a very intimate and visionary world-view. I therefore suggest that the policy communication doesn’t exclude that additional meanings can be at work in parallel for the informants.

3.4.2 Changes over time
When Main and Lai 2013 argue for a standpoint, they base their argument substantially on a text by Thich Nhath Hanh from 1967. I have found him expressing a different position than the one used as argument, in lectures and in a talk from 2009 (Frater Ralph). Some informants doubt that his activities after 2000 can be described as Engaged Buddhism. A mapping is attached in Appendix 2, summarizing media communication aims and strategies by his group
over time from my ComDev assignment on globalization. The listing of shifting positions is not complete, but serves as example of the fluidity and change possible within one organization when analyzing programming. It is not recommended to make conclusions on contemporary features of a movement based on old texts.

3.4.3 Inter-disciplinary views on identity
When comparing literature, Engaged Buddhism and post-colonialism seem to share an obsession of identity. One of three characteristics of human existence commonly raised by Buddhists is that there is no self, thus no fixed identities. (Constant impermanence is another characteristics, next to specific suffering when being human). According to Buddhist scholars, Buddhism do not assert the existence of a creator, and in contrast to Hinduism or Jainism do not assert the existence of *atman*, an eternal soul that is unitary, permanent and unchanging (Jinpa 2005:21). As there are no fixed selves, a dualistic world-view is futile. There are many practices in use among Buddhists for mentally and emotionally cultivating a state where identities are no longer at play.

King (2009) means that the no-self doctrine influences Engaged Buddhists to act for human equality and against racism, sexism, nationalism and class et cetera. (The doctrine does not always lead to such conclusions among Buddhists.) My findings support this as all informants refer to the no-self doctrine when wanting to include excluded groups: BD argue against stereotyping of women and men from no-self principles; SCK and ATA against black-and-white stereotyping of oppressor and victim; and the Japanese activists argue against cultural expressions of success versus failure in life. Ethnicity politics, stereotyping of other Buddhist traditions and nationalism is often contested in policies and programming of activities. In the words of the informant SJ/Savita Jadhav in India, citing the Dalit leader B.R. Ambedkar:

"My father repeated time and again the Buddhist resistance to dualism at home, that people can not be divided. It is not right to put up a person against another. We are born equal, not by caste. ‘Worth, not birth’.”

Such advocacy against identities is not unfamiliar to post-colonialists. When exploring how narratives influences power-relations its adherents most often stress that individuals possess a contextual hybridity of changing identities and shall thus not be minimized into a specific position. Post-colonialists criticize effects connected to that
“Central to western philosophy has been the notion that the ‘self’ is defined by constructing the ‘other’.” (Ewan 2009:122)

Although departing from different understandings of the concept identity and to some extent conflicting goals - as these Engaged Buddhists aim to erase the illusion of identities but post-colonialists want to increase an awareness of their inevitable existence - both views are used when contesting dualism, stereotypes and fixed understandings of others.

3.4.4 Inter-disciplinary views on non-violence
Main and Lai 2013 apply a view on non-violent methods as a moral question. Having studied Buddhist movements in Japan and China during the first half of the twentieth century, they argue that the moral aspect of “good” versus “bad” is influencing the conceptualization of Engaged Buddhism by western scholars. They call for a broader view on the category of Socially Engaged Buddhism than today, notably including actors that don’t share non-violence as explicit approach. They recommend a criteria stating: “what is similar among ‘Socially Engaged’ groups is not a particular political position, form of activism, or type of leadership” (2013:7). Instead, they find similarities in religious positioning.

Main and Lai present Asian ideological predecessors of the contemporary non-violent actors that has not been enough recognized by scholars as they have not rejected violence, such as the Chinese Taixu. This is an important contribution, for three reasons: It highlights the influence from local historical figures; it points at the lack of local language sources, and it balances a self-centered perspective of some western scholars. Reading the literature, I find that exchanges with the West during colonial eras, liberation theology and Protestantism are issues much more referred to than descriptions of national social reformers and thinkers in the region where the objects of study lives. As contrast, all my informants refer only additionally to Western influences. Primarily they highlight qualities of Buddhist pragmatism; historical Buddhists; and social reformers in their region. When visiting the offices, portraits thereof embellish the walls. The methodologies of M.K. Gandhi are referred to by all but the Japanese informants.

However, from a perspective of critical realism I do not support Main and Lai’s theoretical suggestion that non-violence can be categorized as a moral issue, full stop, and that methods to activism can be disregarded when analyzing Engaged Buddhism. Firstly, they address activities theoretically as moral standpoints (2013:3), but actors with different ethical grounds and moral can use similar choice of activities. Secondly, informants all apply non-
violence as method for activism and make references to Buddhist ethics, but also to pragmatism. Within studies of political science, international relations and conflict management, the motives and effects of non-violence are not always equaled with morale but commonly studied from its various strategies and assumed results (Chenoweth & Stephan 2011). ComDev activities are part of the strategies for actual change, such as in the globally influential handbook on non-violence “From Dictatorship to Democracy” by Gene Sharp, commissioned by a Burmese publisher for benefitting the opposition movement (2010). Non-violence strategies are often related to lower material and human costs, to asymmetric power-balances and better post-conflict possibilities of co-existence and peace-building. Thus one must not actually subscribe ethically to unconditioned pacifism to endorse non-violence strategies, as Main and Lai imply. Non-violent action can be a moral or an instrumental positioning, or both. My material further indicates that promotion of non-violent activism and ethics shall not automatically be equaled with that all actors would reject a national armed response if being attacked, for example. Further, negotiated meanings of violence are at play related to self-immolation as means of protest. Neither Thich Nhat Hanh nor his Sister Chan Khong (2007) defines this as suicide or self-destruction: “They sacrificed themselves in order to seek help from the people of the world.” (Thich Nhat Hanh 1993:45).

In opposition to Main and Lai, I advance as conclusion that non-violence is of significant relevance when scholars define the type of engagement discussed, independently of historical references.
4. THEMATIC ENGAGEMENT WITH APPROACHES OF PROGRAMMING

Previous section analyzed and discussed Buddhist interpretations discursively and culturally. In this section, I depart from the informants’ organizational action at macro-level by linking it to central themes shaping the social and cultural structures of development cooperation. The organization’s development programming is analyzed from mode of action and target groups. I have selected three central approaches relevant for programming on development for change: the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), targeted communication, and power-analysis. HRBA is often called rights-based approach and is not equal to the much debated and topic-focused conceptual framework of Human Rights.

As action of Engaged Buddhists is very little studied from development programming perspectives, I seek to address from my primary material how the sampling-unit communicates issues that are related to the three approaches, and how the programming seems to function in practice from a general view based on my observations. When information is lacking due to limited time spend for collecting enough primary data, secondary sources are referred to such as literature and organizational material.

Each central theme or programming approach is firstly introduced, secondly followed by sub-sections with analysis related to the primary material. This unconventional way of presenting my findings is as described earlier, a way to enable a thematic structure in an accessible manner despite managing a rich material and mixed methods.

4.1 Human Rights (what)

If Buddhism explains why the informants do something, and how, the Human Rights can be used to explain what problems they address – and how. The international frameworks of Human Rights (HR) are described widely in literature as HR constitutes a global paradigm shaping many countries constitutions and legislations, thus influencing a dominant range of public services and decisions (Andersson 2013:183).

The 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights is commonly referred to as official start of the HR-paradigm within development. It “recognized that development and human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.” (World Bank and OECD, 2013:xxix). The Introduction presented my interest in how programming can be influenced by specific interpretations of moral guidelines and beliefs, and Human Rights can be regarded as a dominant paradigm today with hegemonic status. To strengthen people’s possibilities to
access and realize their rights is a dominant objective for major bilateral and multilateral donors and applicants are commonly asked to present how they contribute to this. Hylland Eriksen has called the Human Rights not a global language but a shared grammar (2007:65). It’s a set of standardized transnational thematic principles that always have a local element when practiced.

Policy communication of CSOs within development cooperation is commonly related to HR at macro level. The topics addressed by the organizations represented by the informants could in line with this culture be described from all topics in the UDHR, with exception of Articles 10,11,16,17 and 27. However, HR are not used as references in the interviews, in contrast to CSOs working with related areas of work. My informants instead partly raised concrete topics, such as lack of housing, equality, security, health-care, citizenship et cetera, partly communicated Buddhist nodes of meaning such as spreading knowledge, wisdom, compassion, decrease the suffering, or increase the possibilities for awakening and interconnectedness.

During the last decade, I haven’t encountered a FBO or CSO within the development industry stating that its work is not compatible with Human Rights. CSOs are prone to translate their concept and programming to this language commonly preferred by western donors. Human Rights-focused FBOs are comparatively few in the development industry, and most do however not express their work in rights-based language (The Danish Institute for Human Rights 2014:31). This is of value to explore in further studies on human rights as global grammar expressed at local level. The lack of inclusion in my informants’ policy communication could as example relate to:

a) Knowledge: Unclear understanding of how the concepts is connected to dharma by other Buddhist actors such as described by Keown (2000:64), Prebish and Keown (2010:228) or Harvey (2012:118-122);

b) Inexperience of development donor cultures: Sarvodaya has most experience of international donors and include the terminology in their official policy material, and/or;

c) Conceptual critique: the Human Rights could be assessed as less useful. The organization could for example be uninterested in donor funding and therefore simply use Buddhist terminology. Or, the Human Rights are perceived as less useful than donors find. SJs organization work entirely
on access to national legislation related to HR issues, as example, but prefer to use the national legislation as starting-point. Thirdly, there could be a critical stand on the concept related to Buddhism.

Critical discussions:

Being a shared grammar but not a specific language, individuals claiming one right commonly compete with other’s claims, and states go to war referencing to diverse HR. Critical post-colonialist voices questions HR as perceived “nature law” or neutral ethics in the West, a blindness for its contemporary structural power.

According to Harvey, Buddhists commonly question how to morally relate to the public body responsible for protecting and promoting the Rights of individuals (2012:119), the so called duty-bearer being key target for strategic communication efforts within HR activism. This can be perceived as too dualistic or one-sided, while other reject this view and find mutuality of duties as intrinsic to HR.

Namli raises as scholar of ethics, that HR are legal as well as moral and political instruments (2014:10-11). As such, by supporting HR donors support a certain moral. From her critical studies of various religions and HR, she states that protection of HR should take the fact of global inequality as point of departure, and be based on power analysis. She argues that there is a tendency among western proponents of HR to accuse the other of being corrupted by power if not subscribing to the same perspective (2014:18f). Referring to Habermas’ writings on distorted communication in the public - a core interest for him since his groundbreaking work 1962 on analyzing old and modern public spheres - Namli raises that traditional liberal views of religion unjustly excludes religious rationality from public discourse (Habermas 2008 cited in Namli 2014:18).

4.1.1 Human Rights Based Approach (how and who)
Scholars on religion have so far paid much attention to various perspectives on the Human Rights, but very little to the HRBA. Unfortunately, I argue, as HRBA as analytical tool is less politicized and can contribute to the understanding on how specific work-processes may create results or problems.

Influenced by civil society, many donors have over the last two decades developed approaches in order to integrate human rights principles into operational activities of development (Council of European Union 2014:3,12). The European Union committed in
2012 to move towards a right-based approach to development cooperation (p3). A UN Statement of “Common Understanding on the Human Rights-Based Approaches to development Cooperation and Programming” was adopted in 2003. HRBA was 2007 defined as one of the five common programming principles of the UN next to gender equality, environmental sustainability, results-based management, and capacity development (United Nations Development Group 2015). The two last principles have been identified as enabling, while the three other are suggested to be normative, for example when the International Labour Organization/ILO, writes in a guiding note (2010:2): “The 2 enabling principles offer means to make the normative principles operational.” HRBA is as such regarded as a normative method motivated from underpinning theories of what is seen as good. Commonly, the underpinning values are related to principles of democracy, although I have interestingly not found a direct source for this argumentation.

According to the UN commissioner’s office for HR, a HRBA approach identifies “rights-holders and their entitlements and corresponding duty-bearers and their obligations, and works towards strengthening the capacities of rights-holders to make their claims and of duty-bearers to meet their obligations.” (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2006:15). Rights-based approach/HRBA is addressed as both morally right and instrumental for sustainable outcomes (p16). Various HRBA-typologies are at play, but common principles for policy-analysis are participation; non-discrimination/inclusion; transparency and accountability.

4.2 Analysis: Non-discrimination
Of the main HRBA-principles are non-discrimination little discussed with the informants due to lack of time. However, non-discrimination of specific groups is central advocacy goal for some organizations, such as for Dalit rights (SJ) or female monks rights (BD). The interviews have not elaborated systematically upon non-discrimination, partly as many informants state inclusiveness and non-dualism as core principles, full stop.

ATA: “We are only judged on the basis of our actions. It has been the politicians who have gone to war and held the population hostage. While Sinhalese politicians, of all parties and for their own purposes, have cast Buddhism into the role of a prostitute, common people (reference to local Tamils) are fully aware of the genuine nature of Buddhism.
Persons from other faiths and ethnic groups have participated in all informants activities during my observations. This observation however says little on their position and experiences. Secondary sources provide anecdotal additional information as literature on the work of SS, ATA and SCK further describe that non-discrimination is an ideal shaping policies, although few has studied how this dimension is fulfilled in practice. ATAs Sarvodaya has according to Watts attracted at minimum three ideological groups: Buddhist, Tamils interested in Gandhi, and secular development workers. (2009c:126-128).

Non-discrimination of sexual minorities is not at all studied related to the sampling unit and their organizations.

Conclusion:

All informants’ policies endorse non-discrimination as central ideal and participatory observations and secondary sources indicate levels of ethnic inclusion. This limited study can however not make conclusions on how these ideals are realized in practice.

4.2.1 Analysis: Participation

Secondary sources strongly support that participation can be called a virtue within both contemporary development discourses and Engaged Buddhism (Cohen & Upphoff 2011:34, Sister Chan Kong 2007:49, Nishikawa 2012:87).

The final exhortation delivered by Buddha was that each and every one in a community must “be refuges unto yourselves, seeking no external refuge” (Sister Vaijira & Story 1998). There are many Buddhist nodes of meaning and narratives supporting individual and inter-personal friendship, cooperation and participatory practices that can be used when promoting similar values for societal processes. Further, monastic rules are referred to when discussing co-operation and co-living.

Participation is also expressed in literature as an ideal for richer countries today, the development economist Nishikawa states. Departing from the Thai Buddhist economist Payutto, he promotes a new rural development paradigm after the earthquake-tsunami-nuclear disaster in Japan 2011 based on bottom-up initiatives (Nishikawa 2012:87):

“Buddhism condemns a top-down and centralized type of development (pattana), which increases the acquisitive mind and greed, and shows way to reach development from within and spiritual fulfillment (bhavana)”. 
From the development industry’s perspective, the normative body the United Nation’s Economic and Social Council recommends governments to adopt popular participation far more extensively than related to elections, such as encouraging inhabitants participation individually and via organizations in development processes “in setting goals, formulating policies and implementing plans” (Cohen & Upphoff 2011:34). Mefalopulus draws from instrumental arguments when discussing benefits, such as lower costs; empowering emotions for participants; it can spur and created other results; encourages responsibility; and invites local expertise (2008:51). In scholar work on religion, similar results are claimed for Engaged Buddhists’ work but without references to development research.

Nederveen Pieterse describes how an alternative development paradigm inclusive of popular participation was established internationally in the late 1980s in the Global South partly as a reaction against structural development paradigms represented by the Bretton Woods institutions (Nederveen Pieterse 2010:84-90). Alternative development approaches are according to him holistic, practice-oriented, people-centered and participation-oriented (ibid:91). The alternative bulk of work got recognition by the mainstream industry, resulting in that approaches promoted by these alternatives are today included in an established mainstream paradigm (ibid:105-108).

Many informants work in hierarchal (Buddhist) cultures of limited political participation. From the primary material I firstly find that all informants base their approach to development work on active participation of people, and design their efforts to enable this. The action performed is assumed by the informant’s statements to become more a) ethical and b) constructive for the activist if compassionate introspection is performed regularly within the scope of work. Participation in action is associated with inner development. Psychological awakening is for example one of the three organizational objectives of Sarvodaya, next to political and economic awakening. Participation is referred to by all informants, but not hierarchal approaches such as instruction from a leader, normative groups of power within organizations, etc. I therefore assume that such modes are considered less ideal and less openly discussed, even if they are in use.

Secondly, I suggest from secondary material (literature and organizations information) that in particular SCK, SS and ATA could be regarded as part of the alternative actors developing methods that was acknowledged in the 1980s, some 15 years after they
started according to him - even if Engaged Buddhism and this agenda is not connected in literature to my knowledge, nor mentioned by him. For example, School of Youth for Social Service, the extensive rural life-skills self-help program Sister Chan Khong created with her group in Vietnam started 1966 (2007:87-89). And the Sarvodaya village self-help program started in the late 1950s in Sri Lanka by A.T. Ariyaratne based on components often referred to the method of Participatory Rural Appraisal/PRA established 20 years later by Chambers et al (Cohen & Uphoff 2011). Both programs are described in Prebish and Keown 2010, Deitrick 2010, and King 2009. 15 000 villages have so far been included according to Sarvodaya in a five-step self-help model establishing self-governance and agenda setting. Sarvodaya’s model has via Joanna Macy and others influenced movements in the West of feminism and of environment.

My primary material supports the use of extensive participatory methods of Sarvodaya. As example, the villagers I met during participatory observations described this structured process in detail and how it has enabled rapid tsunami-responses and their micro-banks, small shops, kindergartens, roads, small businesses, roofing and sewage system. ATA indicate the structure when he explains how he could invite a million participants, most without phones, to mass-meditations in Sri Lanka as protest against the war. 650 000 participated at one mass-meditation 2002, and in total 2,7 million persons are estimated to have participated (Zalta 2013:189, Deitrick 2010:45). He refers to the trust, organizational skills and contacts created after decades of participatory community projects.

ATA: “This is how it is done: Each village is part of a division, each division belongs to a district. The country is divided into 34 districts. It is only to prompt them and the system comes into action very quickly. I would be able to do it again tomorrow! (smile)”

Conclusion:

Participation is at the center of the informant’s policies, with many references to Buddhist doctrines and texts. All informants base their approach to development work on active participation of people. The early informants can be assumed to be among pioneers within the international alternative development paradigm being mainstreamed as ideal today. Approaches of self-governance and action in line with Participatory Rural Appraisal are not uncommon.
4.2.2 Analysis: Accountability

Accountability is here understood as a relationship between those who set the rules and those who are subject to them, suggesting that inhabitants as well as state institutions have a role to play in delivering governance that works for the poor and enhances democracy. Rocha and Sharma find that: “In particular, citizens’ capacity to express and exercise their views has the potential to influence government priorities or governance processes.” (2008:5). They identify activities that enable people to raise their voices as means to create changes in behaviour, practice, policy and power relations.

Giving voice for increased accountability means not just expressing views, but also to raise awareness, build relationships, educate, create alliances, press charges and strengthen the capacity of the assumed opponent to understand better.

Informants are selected from not just being theoretically normative, but also experienced providers of solutions to the problems they have identified. They actively participate in offering expertise and solutions, not (just) one-sided complaining or demanding action from the duty-bearer. Both my primary and secondary material suggests that the informants in the study give voice publicly to their views, and depart partly from trust and research created from the activities. These contributions position them as actors holding duty-bearers accountable for their decisions, although not necessarily expressed in a confrontational manner. Sarvodaya has politically promoted its “500 year Peace Plan” for Sri Lanka, with detailed approaches to relief, rehabilitation, reconciliation, reconstruction (on the basis of Sarvodaya’s model) and re-awakening (Commonway Institute 2015, King 2009:85). The number 500 has specific Buddhist references.

SJ’s organization trains slum-dwellers in both problem-definition and local bare-foot research on the identified problem. They compare the finding with relevant legislation and present it to both duty-bearers and media. In my primary material, SJ relates the approach to being a watch-dog revealing discrimination, but equally to empowerment of participants via social action. Many modes are in use in parallel, such as simpler press-releases conveying disagreement raised related to public decisions or events, and she is inspired by methods like Chambers PLA/Participatory Learning and Action (2006:99).

SJ: “You have to have a concrete issue to change when you meet. Otherwise you just pass time together. But when working together and actually succeed to change something, your consciousness is changed through the very experience.”
Discourses on what it means to influence others:

But the question remains on how far does the sampling-unit really go in the criticism, and do informants change duty-bearers behavior at all?

Main and Lai suggest that Engaged Buddhists aim is to “remake society” and “Buddhicize” it (2013:17). In contrast, Queen criticizes Engaged Buddhists for not enough opposing unethical duty-bearers and not promoting reform of society (2003:15). Watts criticize Buddhism in Asia for the same (2009a:viii).

In my primary material, Sivaraksa share this criticism and even define Engaged Buddhism as being explicitly critical to societal structures and dominant actors:

SS: “You have to help people to understand structural violence. I think for me that is a main, essential element of Engaged Buddhism. Because without understanding structural violence I think we shall become "goody-goody", you know.”

SS has made a mark by promoting that to live ethically as individual in the modern world, structures need to be challenged. He interprets Buddhist ethics from Galtung’s concept structural violence:

“But, the point is that nowadays violence against life... We don't do it directly anymore but we allow the state to do it. You see? Unless you challenge the state. The state is the whole structural violence of society, the same. You don't steal, but you allow the bank to steal, or the World Bank, the IMF. That you have to understand.”

This is different from other interpretations, mostly not including specific organizations as actors to challenge. During the last 10 years, Thich Nhath Hanh as contrast commonly refer to so called Buddhist psychology and the importance of planting seeds and water others plants, instead of promoting political action as explicitly as he once did (in the 1960-70s). He explains Engaged Buddhism in a recorded lecture (Frater Ralph 2009):
“When people hear the word Engaged Buddhism they think of Buddhism as a form of activities: struggle for social justice, equality, human rights, and things like that. But Engaged Buddhism is not just that. Fighting poverty, fighting social justice, fighting human... Engaged Buddhism is first of all the kind of Buddhism that you live your daily life. When you wash your dishes, Buddhism must be there. When you drive your car, Buddhism should be there.”

The theory of change expressed publicly by members of his organization during my participatory observations at his monastery can be defined as: If a certain amount of individuals change from a voluntary basis and according to their own preferences, society will be changed as it is a collection of individuals. The causal link between action and effect is hence not strong. His co-worker SCK does reflect this view in my material, but express also a stronger interest in strategically targeting persons in specific power-positions.

SS, BD, ATA and SJ accept this principle for change as possible, but adhere more than the other informants to strategically directed theories of change, measurable and timely plans for change directed at a specific type of target. They understand societal processes and structures as complex and not only equaled with an aggregate of its individuals. SJ’s organization implement strictly targeted activities as core approach. She refers it to Ambedkar’s campaigning:

"He always examined the facts first. First time for mapping, and then he made a practical plan. He dared to test different solutions precisely because he had done his research. I have read the stories about him and studied his different strategies. It was a completely different time, but the same principles apply today. We can use them, too."

The primary material reflect, as illustrated above, conflicting preferences on how direct and targeted one need to address duty-bearers in order to enable the assumed change, and how fast the change should be realized. This influences what effects that can be related to accountability.

**Conclusion:**

All actors work towards increased accountability of duty-bearers by giving voice to views, and they suggest changes and possibly cooperation.
A dominant mode of communication is to offer the target expertise and cooperation, not (just) one-sided complaining or demanding things from the duty-bearer.

Participatory approaches of collective learning commonly shape advocacy activities, but many modes are in use such as simpler communication actions such as press-statements with disagreement raised related to public decisions or events.

There are conflicting understandings of how direct one needs to address duty-bearers in order to enable the assumed change, and how fast the change shall be realized. As a consequence, the causal link between activities and the claimed/suggested effects is not as a rule evident related to accountability.

4.2.3 Discussion on ideals related to structural power
In this section I discuss how structures within development cooperation can hinder promoted ideals within the same social and cultural sphere, such as enabling programming aiming at self-sustainability and participatory approaches.

The majority of the informants’ organizations primarily work from donations of individuals or the private sector and funds deriving from governmental funds are less frequent, although existing. They however promote as principle, to expand the participatory and horizontally driven activities wider, as the Japanese economist Nishikawa does related to post-Fukushima initiatives (2012:87). This could imply a need of more and larger donations. Some have tried, in particular ATA, SJ and SCK.

Nederveen Pieterse raises as critique of the so called alternative paradigm of the contemporary history of international development that alternative actors have failed to convince how their approaches can be scaled-up and implemented at national level (Nederveen Pieterse 2010:85,87,101). ATAs Sarvodaya has as example been criticized for idealizing village life and for not adjusting quickly enough (Harvey 2012:234). Watts, on the other hand, describes how tension was created when Sarvodaya expanded thanks to international development funds and trained participants in “strategic and planning skills” (2009c:127). The development training dominated over the dharma training, and the best and brightest monks and community leaders disrobed and became civil development workers of Sarvodaya instead.

Participation of many self-sufficiently, “be refuges unto yourselves, seeking no external refuge”, comes by nature with an inherent critique of the technocratic and centralized
approaches often needed for expansion. The informants promote networks of independent organizations over strengthening one’s own management structure. “Engaged Buddhism does not come with building kingdoms”, as Sulak Sivaraksa said to me. Other Buddhist ideals could also be at play here, for example non-greed, as expansion can be related to greed to expand. Some informants further refer to “Buddhist economics” as conceptualized by Schumacher (1989) or Payutto (1994), promoting specific management and the benefits of acting small-scale.

It is not within the scope of this study to understand why desired expansion is far-fetched today for Engaged Buddhists. I therefore raise the need of further studies on power dynamics within the development industry to explore if inherent ideals creating effects international donors endorse, in parallel can lead to effects that makes the actors less administratively feasible to support for major donors today. That said, this is not an unexplored challenge for donors. Small-scale actors with limited knowledge of development cooperation terminology and alternative approaches have been catered for before. As small-scale expansion from participatory approaches tends to take long time compared to many donors’ financial cycles for strategies, establishing funding mechanisms to cater for long-term commitments is an interlinked area of importance.

4.3 Theory of ComDev
Castells highlight the aim of communication by defining it as “sharing of meaning through the exchange of information” (2011:54). This exchange process is of particular interest for communication scholars, discussing axis such as monologic versus dialogic communication, inter-personal communication versus mass-communication and diffusion of information versus participatory and interactive communication.

There are contested titles and definitions of communication for development, being both a practice and a field of knowledge. Lennie and Tacchi describe it as encompassing all modes and techniques of communication (2013:4). They suggest the following definition by Fraser and Restrepo-Astrada that is inclusive of both people’s need to become aware and act to bring about change, and the need for institutions to improve their effectiveness (1998:63 cited in Lennie & Tacchi 2013:4): “Communication for development is the use of communication processes, techniques and media to help people toward a full awareness of their situation and their options for change, to resolve conflicts, to work towards consensus, to help people plan actions for change and sustainable development, to help people
acquire the knowledge and skills they need to improve their conditions and that of society, and to improve the effectiveness of institutions.”

Historically, Communication for Development (ComDev) has been accorded to so-called developing countries, but lately it has merged into a more broad defined interest in social change applicable to any group and geography actively engaging in economic, political, social or cultural change (Wilkins 2008). As social change can occur as a result of variety of factors, development communication intersects with social change at the point of intentional, strategic, organized interventions. Hemer and Tufte describe ComDev not only as an emerging academic discipline in traditional sense, but also as a multidisciplinary field of theory and practice (2012:235). They argue that there is more than ever a need for “cross- or inter-disciplinarity”. There are a variety of research methods used within this inter-disciplinary field of communication (media studies, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, global studies, political science, as examples), including research on behavior change and participatory action research (PAR) resonating with the work of Robert Chambers et al (Wilkins 2008).

ComDev has according to Enghel and Wilkins a well-documented history in particular from 1958 and is now also known as development communication, and communication for social change (2012:9). Dialogic, participatory and democratic approaches to strategic communication provides strengths, such as being concerned with human rights, power and social justice (2012:9). I would like to add that communication is fundamentally important in order to implement programming (assessment, analysis, action) from the five programming principles of the UN above.

Critical approaches have then over the years called attention to issues such as how to address conditions of absolute poverty, unequal access to technical solutions, implicit power dynamics at play in the development industry and the relevance of scholarship on social movements for participatory communication research.

4.3.1 The multi-track model
ComDev as field of study and practice emerged closely interconnected with the development industry, according to Tufte and Mefalopulus (2009:1). These scholars and practitioners have contributed to further the ComDev field by both study specific details as communication scholars commonly do, and address structural preconditions of the development industry domain with user-friendly pragmatism.
Departing from Lasswell’s linear communication theory of sender and receiver from 1948, they suggest three conceptual approaches to ComDev of relevance both in theory and practice (2009:7-9). 1) Interventions influenced by Rogers model from 1962 of diffusion and dissemination of information often used for social marketing and behavior change. 2) A horizontal dialogic participatory model based on Freire’s liberating pedagogy from 1970, and 3) an intermediary model referred to Hendricks 1998 and used for life skills education of adults, and connected to rights-based approaches and addressing structural conditions.

The informants and their organization all use all these models of communication according to my findings based on both the primary material and secondary sources such as organizational texts and literature. They implement different modes at different occasions within common phases (such as the phases for problem analysis, mobilization, research, strategy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.). Mobilization phases have often so far included direct instructions or teachings, as well as participatory research. Participatory communication and dialogic modes of communication is raised by all informants as ideal, but they do in parallel endorse monologic modes by a democratic teacher, life-skill expert and of mere transmission of information.

This pragmatic mix that I have found includes the benefits of all three communication theories introduced above. I argue that it can be adhered to the multi-track model of communication proposed by Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009:13). The model departs from two main features, monologic and dialogic communication, and thereby includes activities of both linear one-way transmission of information, and two-way communication where the process is open-ended and generates possibly new knowledge and solutions. Both features can be performed with varieties in how linear the causal effects are related to the activities, and are as such a theoretical model of use for system approaches and complexity thinking programming.

Communication studies are much concerned in understanding what action that enables a specific change of a specific object (target). This is specifically articulated in approaches of strategic communication planning identifying the direct links as close as possibly between targeted action and levels of effect. Such methods have according to my experience very much in common with one of the five programming principles of the UN as presented in 4.1.1, result-based management.
My conclusion is that the ComDev multi-track model can be identified as the preferred approach at policy-level by the informants.

4.3.2 Analysis: Communication culture
When addressing different target-groups for influencing change, the way of communicating is intrinsically interwoven with the aims of the communication, and with parties involved. The perceptions of both sender and receiver shape the interpretations. As consequence, not only personas and communicated content influence the effect, but how one communicates.

“If one thinks on the basis of compassion, one understands other people and oneself”, SCKs teacher Thich Nhat Hạnh begins one lecture (2011), and later continues:

“Words are to be used for reconciliation. They are to demonstrate confidence. You can practice the correct words wherever you are, sitting at the computer, with your portable audio device, everywhere.”

His congregation is a strong proponent for a modality of communication King has named “love” according to Queen (2013:4) but I use Queens “gentle” speech. This communication mode can be referred to Engaged Buddhists interpretation of Buddhist texts, such as practices of self-cultivation and interpretations of non-dualism, and of Right Speech. One of many canonical texts, Vaca Sutta (Thanissaro Bhikkhu 2000): "It is spoken at the right time. It is spoken in truth. It is spoken affectionately. It is spoken beneficially. It is spoken with a mind of good-will.”

In my primary material, several informants, independently of tradition, discuss speech related to arrogance and stress the virtue of humbleness from not having the full picture. A friendly approach is recommended by all informants, although they differ regarding its definition. Gentleness, compassion and uncertainty can be regarded as opposite from a global conventional mode of advocacy for social change, as in claiming rights, using metaphors of struggle, protesting against public priorities or misuse of power.

Sulak Sivaraksa is outspoken and secondary sources show that he has been exiled, jailed and prosecuted from publicly criticizing powers. Sivaraksa’s auto-biography is called “Loyalty demands dissent” (1998). He seems not quite stick to the suttas talking about friendliness, welcomed speech and soft voice. Rather to the ones also existing, saying that
unwelcome but well-meaning criticism is good, such as Abhaya sutta (Thanissaro Bhikkhu 1997).

But in my primary material, Sivaraksa surprisingly disagrees, negotiating gentle speech as criticism from karma as an act of good intention:

SS: “It depends. I think I mostly follow the first line with kindly speech. Buddha said that the best friend is someone who says what you do not want to hear. So I try to be a good friend.”

Sivaraksa’s communication style is not what usually is associated with Buddhism in the West, which is rather the humble tone free of accusations used by the foreword-author of Sivaraksa’s autobiography, the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet. He is by many scholars pointed at as the paramount figure representing Buddhist culture in the West, influencing the stereotyping of Buddhism as happiness-oriented (see 1.4.1).

When asked if the moral code of Buddhism promotes a culture of silence and by-standers, Sivaraksa says in my primary material:

“No, No. I would not call that a Buddhist attitude. It is more an Asian attitude.”

Bhikkhuni Dhammananda/BD, also Thai, exemplified earlier the dialogic tradition of communication in dharma-discussions (2.6.1). When I suggest BD that one of the challenging goals will demand thousand years of gentle speech, she also addresses cultural references:

” If you stand up in this country and shout at them you are not only taking thousand years, you are taking thousand years backwards. Eventually they will come out and they will do it. Let it be their initiation. It will happen the Asian way.”

Two strands of speech:

When comparing leading Engaged Buddhists who deal with injustices, Queen has analyzed both suttas and writings addressed to media and duty-bearers (2003:1-17). He identifies two main lines (also being represented above) that respectively can be called “gentle” and “corrective”.

Gentle speech: The Tibetan leader and Thích Nhat Hạnh are then representing a tradition of non-dualism and humbleness, highlighting that both the victim and perpetrator are
suffering, and emphasizing the value of non-violence - and then hope for the best. There are no demanding calls for what should be done, no suggestions. This common type of open message/speech is sympathetic to Queen, but he questions whether it is useful - or even correct interpretation of Buddhism. When innocent people are dying for example, it is doubtful whether it is a moral right response to focus on thoughts that create understanding and identification with the perpetrators, or push that perpetrators also suffer from something.

Queen’s analysis of communication modes is useful for understanding advocacy of Engaged Buddhists. The mode described shall still not be equaled with actor’s full strategy to a problem. Thich Nhat Hanh as recognized religious leader represents according to Queen the gentle approach, but in my primary material his energetic co-worker explains advocacy like this:

SCK: “It is most important to begin speaking to people as if to friends. People are most influenced by their friends, not by their adversaries. There are always people on your side in the opposition camp. Like-minded on the issues. Then it is a matter of exerting oneself in the correct way. To explain what one hopes to achieve on the basis of compassion for others. Never use anger.”

Corrective/harsh speech: Sulak Sivaraksa is however, as late Ambedkar, a representative of corrective speech, according to Queen. Sivaraksa teaches and corrects, assess and proposes own solutions (2003:4). Queen calls it corrective or harsh, and connects it to Kings category of “prophetic speech” which seeks to judge and correct the ethical misconduct of persons and institutions outside of the religious community.

Sivaraksa has been granted an anthology with eighty-nine contributions from world-famous Buddhists and activists, all describing his value for broadening the discussions in public and Buddhist spheres (Chappell, (ed.) 2003). Aung San Suu Kyi writes that compassion without wisdom can be harmful in a world populated by people who are not perfect - and sometimes that the virtue wisdom of the Eightfold Path means to outspokenly correct others (2003:640).

Negotiated meanings:

All informants in my primary material, including Sivaraksa, subscribe to Right speech as ideally non-harsh free from anger and non-judgemental. They seem to negotiate meanings related to this central value, when in need of corrective communication:
ATA: ”It is much harder to work now. (shortened) We also have to be more condemnatory than before. Earlier we avoided giving explicit warnings but now we say straight out: “Don’t eat food that has been sprayed in that way, it is harmful.” We did not need to do that before.

SJ excuse herself:

”This is my war. It’s not Buddhist practice to talk in this way. But so it is.”

SCK explains their use of verbal threats in the 70s - directed at the US to throw boat-refugees in its sea, at one occasion - not from unkind aggression, but strength:

“Sometimes we were forced to make this great noise. Sometimes it is necessary to demonstrate your strong side. We have always had two sides to our work: a gentle side and a strong side. And in this case the strong side brought about results.”

Conclusion

The interviews confirm that the ethical guideline of Right Speech conveys meanings for them that are connected to enabling inner development of both sender and receiver, which is perceived as instrumental for achieving the development goals from a morally correct programming approach. The goals expressed are not just related to societal problem/topic in, but are found to in parallel promote a communication culture conveying Buddhist meanings of kindness via gentle and/or corrective speech. The communication culture is part of what the informants try to change in society, mainly by how they conduct themselves related to others.

4.4 Theory of power
Societies are not communities sharing values and interests, Castells argue (2009:14): “They are contradictory social structures enacted in conflicts and negotiations among diverse and often opposing actors.” With warfare-terminology he put forward a world-view of never ending conflicts that only pause and new struggles follow. Engaged Buddhists are suggested to address social and political powers, albeit as the title of this study suggests, they do not necessarily define it as struggle for power. Does this mean that they lack interest in the underlying dimensions of theories on power? This section describes forms of power that can be used for studying the work and effects of actors like the sampling-unit, promote systemic or holistic development approaches with both short-term and long-term ambitions.
After studying how the power-struggle for social justice is expressed within a Buddhists Dalit organization working for equal rights in Pune, India - an organization with some contact with the less urban and pro-poor working Sadhana Institute of SJ - Rinker concludes from a perspective of conflict studies that it’s important for the group studied to create a Buddhist identity to oppose discrimination, but more than this: ”what is needed to overcome the dominant power asymmetries in society is a way to engaged the ‘other’ without disenfranchising or decoupling themselves from the ‘other’. (2009:327-328). Goals according to Rinker are hence not expressed in common activist terms of “gaining power over” but in terms of “realizing our inter-connectedness”. King further describes how ethics of non-dualism lead to design of interventions that do not promote a solution of one part winning, such as winning a war, as this implies a loser (2009:85).

I conclude from my primary material that Rinkers’ finding also is valid for the policies communicated by the informants. I suggest that this is central for understanding the advocacy and reform modes of working by the sampling unit– it is a central piece of the puzzle explaining how they do what they do. This policy perspective shaping their communication is distributed from holistic thinking with the aim to achieve changes within people, and systemically relational such as between people, groups, communities, organizations, et cetera.

Further, my findings from the primary material are that informants independently of country express the communication aims of non-dualism and inter-connectedness when they take a critical position but still make effort to mention good side of the topic. When informants express critical views on one political actor, this is often balanced by critique of its assumed opponent. The dominant power however gets most critique. I conclude that this balancing when criticising power plays a role within their shared system of meaning related to Buddhism.

Finally, I suggest that the policy-ideal of non-dualism can righteously add to the stereotyping of Buddhism as “happiness-oriented” as it can hide or ignore conflicts of interest. When discussing that adversaries lose power from the informant’s actions, several informants in my primary material still formulated it as a win-win strategy. They argued that the other is also winning as he/she is winning something appreciated by the informant - even if the adversary doesn’t see it that way.
4.4.1 Power from participation
As described earlier, participatory approaches are central for the sampling-unit and motivated from their view on inter-relatedness and non-dualism. Cohen and Upphoff put forward theoretical points related to power(2011:54-55): Participation is diverse and pluralistic, participation in development is different from in politics but it has political dimensions; participation is not just an end in itself but it is more than a means, and there is a connection among different kinds of participation.

A model of four levels of participation is suggested by Tufte and Mefalopulos in relation to communication (2009:6), but it resonates with common types from other fields: 1). Passive participation such as being informed with minimal possibilities to give feedback. Participation by: 2). Consultation, such as informing experts with no obligation to incorporate the views. 3). Collaboration, such as primary stakeholders participate in analysis of set objectives. 4.) Empowerment participation, where primary stakeholders initiate and take part of analysis and decision-making as equal partners.

Arnstein argues that citizen participation is citizen power and suggest an eight-graded typology where the highest level of genuine participation is citizen-control over decision-making seats (2011:3-5). At the bottom end are participatory processes with no such influence, categorized as manipulation or therapy.

From Arnsteins model, I can conclude that only one of the informants has raised the need for participants’ to aim for decision-making positions in politics. On the other hand, emotional individual introspection and psychological change via monologic and dialogic communication practices (see below) is important and crucial part of the theory of change informing the mode of action for all informants. Arnstein seems to call these domains of action therapy and manipulation, the bottom of the ladder. Next section will contrast her view from the theory of invisible, informal and formal power-levels.

4.4.2 Invisible, informal and formal power
Power can, as participation, have many dimensions and can be regarded as both positive and negative. Chambers call it ”an ability to achieve a wanted end in a social context, with or without the consent of others” (Vermeulen 2005:12 cited in Chambers 2006:100).

VeneKlasen and Miller state that power is often identified as negative and exercised over someone. ”Practitioner’s and academics have searched for more collaborative ways to exercising and using power” (2002:39). Participation is then connected to mobilizing power to
do something, and enables power to act with others. Addressing different forms of power demands different strategies of action.

VeneKlasen and Miller suggest three dimensions of power that can be useful for analysis of Engaged Buddhism in action (2002):

1. Formal power represented for example by duty-bearers and national and local decision-making bodies, military, police, the juridical. The power is visible as in decision-making, according to VeneKlasen and Miller.
2. Informal power, represented by media, trade unions, business, teachers, doctors, religious leaders, development donors. Their power legitimizes but is hidden, as in setting agendas.
3. Invisible power, such as the mind, social and cultural norms, internalized beliefs, behaviors, identities. This form of power shapes meaning, values and socialization.

I suggested earlier that CSOs are part of a third sector in society. As such, the informants’ organizations are informal powers in their contexts. In particular ATAs Sarvodaya has become an informal power at local levels with 34 district offices, being invited to cooperate with public servants and local duty-bearers.

_Empowerment_

The three forms of power can be argued to be superfluous as they all are represented within the concept of empowerment. Empowerment here means: "enhancing an individual’s or group’s capacity to make choices and transform these choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process is actions which both build individual and collective assets, and improves the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets.”(World Bank, n.d.). Empowerment is a complex form of power as it is neither linear nor predictable. addresses invisible power by involving ”individual discovery and change” (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002:45). The Buddhist ideals of self-cultivation could be described similarly, according to me. Further, empowerment indicates per definition to be able to address all levels of power, as informal agenda-setting and formal decision-making are important for societal changes (VeneKlasen & Miller 2002:43). "Social justice advocates want their strategies to empower people so they can stand up for their rights, and help create just, healthy societies. In this way, empowerment is both a strategy and a goal of citizen-centred advocacy.”
Donor’s responsibility includes comparing and selecting among available development initiatives. I argue that empowerment is useful for policy indications but not necessarily as analytical concept as it today is all-encompassing, giving that most varied programming likely can refer to empowerment.

Reflections on the threefold power-model

I suggest that the threefold power analysis model is more useful in systemic programming for understanding how actors work in addition to why, the perspective so far in most focus for scholars. Strategic communication means from ComDev perspectives, but also from perspectives of the five UN principles of programming result-based management, to optimize the activity for a desired effect or changed behavior of a specific agent. However, as described in 2.2, programming that promotes linear, step-by-step understandings of social change fail to capture the potentially positive impacts achieved via participatory processes and holistic or systemic approaches messy, circular complex processing.

I suggest that the threefold-power model can be a tool for holistic approaches that contributes with some clarity and as such can be used for analysis. Evaluation from multi-dimensional power-theory can lead to increased analytical clarity of the effects from holistic approaches, here marked by ideal aims as interconnectedness, empowerment, and participation. Effects from such complexity approaches, common within CSO work as within the ComDev field, are difficult to monitor and evaluate due to their fluid and all-encompassing character, (Lennie and Tacci 2013:56-57).

Religion in development is assumed to come with the possibility to empower and transform, as described earlier, and activities or analysis sensitive to religion is suggested useful to “understand social practices that are harmful to people and hinder their enjoyment of human rights.” (UNFPA 2004:2). Thus it can be argued that the model is of particular value for highlighting effects created by faith-based actors, mitigating the risk of core effects not becoming visible from one-level models of analysis.

4.5 Analysis: Power

Two questions have so far repeatedly presented themselves in the study:

To what extent are Buddhists passive to power? And,
How can the holistic claim of influencing all levels of society be studied in a comprehensive way?

This section aims at presenting a way to study this by using indicative findings of this study as illustrative material. The point of departure is to make claims on the informant’s programming, which comes with important limitations: Firstly, the range of activities represented by each informant is diverse and therefore difficult to correctly generalize. I refer to what I know, but this is not all there is. Some activities are for example secret. Secondly, I use secondary sources to fill gaps from my primary material, and the information in each sources do not pay equal attention to all actors. This said, I do have enough primary material to argue for some findings, such as tendencies to be used in the illustrative model further down. And I do find that the analytical instruments presented in the section can contribute with interesting ideas on systemic approaches and possibly serve as point-of-departure for more in-depth research.

Invisible power

I conclude findings from my primary material that it confirms that individual inhabitants (men, women, girls and boys) are primary target-groups for all organizations. All informants further state that they aim at influencing invisible power, and it’s suggested that they do this constantly from how they act and what they do, aiming at influencing socializations, meanings and values from how they address others and topics. Creating “individual discovery and change” is a main point of departure communicated by the informants.

Secondary sources, such as documents on programming and scholarly research, indicate that addressing invisible power to enable empowerment of people is reflected in their main bulk of activities. Previous sections have provided examples of such dimensions, for example related to participation, accountability, dialogic preferences, and dharma as liberation from suffering as it ”shows way to reach development from within” to cite Nishikawa (2012:87).

Informal and formal power

My primary material further shows that informal powers are often directly addressed or invited to cooperate, such as media, public servants, publicly financed service-providers, or private sector. Informal powers can be considered primary targets for seven out of eight organizations, possibly for all depending on delimitation of frequency.
I have further identified from my primary material that a common strategy for enabling influence and change is the principle to offer something in return, such as research-material, work-hours or education. SJ’s organization influences racist behavior among health-care staff by offering them Dalit moderators from the slum for increased outreach there. To influence how prisons treat women, BD offers workshops for inmates and uses this as starting point for dialogue with the management. This can be compared with the conventional primary monastic service of providing laypeople dharma-lectures without normative discussions on other topics.

As strategy for influence and possibly inter-relatedness, it has limitations. I suggest that such cooperation is by its service-oriented nature less possible to offer formal powers compared to informal power, not the least in political contexts of authoritarianism.

Further, this analysis of activities directed at informal and formal power is to a large extent reflecting earlier conclusions on accountability and communication modes. Firstly, all informants promote the a systemic perspective in my material, subscribing to the general idea that activities influence formal powers at the end indirectly, as humans are interconnected and influence each other. However, assumed links between cause and effect are little analyzed. The explicit links leading to this assumed influence on formal power is not expressed or critically analyzed. Time for reaching assumed results is not expressed either. The activity mode for influencing formal power is commonly not compared with alternative modes, with possibly quicker results. Such approach can be called wishful systemic thinking, as oppose to analytical systemic thinking.

Secondly, some of the actors do critically assess that targeting invisible power in the most appropriate way to change individuals, does not necessarily provide a direct link to achieving results in due time on formal power. They put priority to additional communication strategies influencing specifically targeted actors of formal power. A social venture co-owned by SS advocated at the time for the field-work for changes of procurement laws so that Thai public bodies can put priority to organic products. The bare-foot research by SJs organization in India was ultimately compiled and used as evidence of national standards not being implemented by local duty-bearers. BD assessed that direct advocacy targeting the Buddhist formal powers would not be fruitful, and strategically addressed secular informal and formal powers for promoting changes concerning support to female monks/bhikkunis.
As indicated earlier the informant’s organizations seems to highly differ in how explicit and corrective they communicate with formal power, and how much of the total activities that target invisible, informal and formal power respectively. Again, the analysis comes with limitations as the material is not complete.

These Engaged Buddhists can hypothetically not only be positioned in relation to the topics, or the perceived mainstream Buddhism they want to influence, as often discussed by scholars of religion including Main and Lai 2013. The actors can be understood in relation to how they design programming and direct their activities. I suggest that the organizations tentatively can be positioned on a scale depending on how much they include or exclude targeted activities influencing formal power. As the material is limited I stress that this exercise aims at presenting a way to study these actors, and do not claim to present a complete statement on informants organizations.

Positioning to the left indicates a priority to activities changing individual’s inner life, and to the right how much of their activities that are aimed at strategically influencing specific behavior of formal power, actors that have the ultimate decision-making power and access to resources to change societal structures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model: Most targeted power-levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Organization represented by) Informants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCK YO,YM, KJ&amp;GY, ATA, BD, SS, SJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct outcomes from activities changes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invisible power formal power (structures of individuals) (societal structures)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the model above, it is apparent that priests and nuns are dominant to the left. The sampling unit of this study is too small to make conclusions, but it indicates an issue for further studies: The stronger level of religious positioning, the lower interest in corrective speech, confrontational advocacy directed at formal powers, and Arnstein’s political perspectives on “genuine participation”.

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Possible reasons for limited targeting of formal power

It is not within the scope of this study to understand the reasons behind this indicated priority of addressing invisible and informal power. It could be explained by country politics, governing party, corporate cultures, position of the military, the national Buddhist structure, interpretations of monastic rules on worldly politics, the mainstream culture, established or new CSO, leading individual’s educational background, phase of life, experience, et cetera. The Japanese GY as example find that the duty-bearer have a responsibility, but do not necessarily trust that the state would listen to them:

GY: "Buddhism in Japan is like a tree. First, the power-holders cut off the top, Buddhism's management structure. Then they cut the roots off, by rules introduced, and the priests could no longer offer ordinary people what they needed. Today it’s not much left, so to speak. Political cooperation is not the way for us.”

Watts have connected the suggested lack of public criticism from Buddhist perspectives and representatives to both Buddhist and national cultures, and to structural aspects of Buddhism, such as the monastic rules rejecting worldly politics, and monastic organizations co-dependency of the state (2009b:113).

Conclusion from the power-analysis

This section has then addressed and tentatively responded to the two repeated questions: To what extent are Buddhists passive to power? And: How can the holistic claim of influencing all levels of society be studied in a comprehensive way?

All informants aim at influencing invisible power, and it’s suggested that they do not only from appropriately targeted activities, but constantly from how they act and what they say. Creating “individual discovery and change” is a main point of departure as well as influencing socializations, meanings and values from how they address others and topics.

All informant’s organizations address mainly informal power, and to lesser extent formal power. The variety differs substantially between organizations.

Despite the limited base of information for analysis, a hypothesis from the material could tentatively be that these Engaged Buddhists differ in relation to how much they prioritize to directly influence what can be described as the ultimate gate-keepers of structural change.
All actors do focus on changes of inner life/invisible powers and informal powers, but as Queen has indicated, not all challengingly address formal power-holders directly or frequently with suggestions on solutions (2013:17).

From this indicative exercise based on limited material, it can hypothetically be argued from a policy perspective of development cooperation that the sampling-unit does not differ at an essential level related to Buddhist ideals, approaches to development or topics, as much as regarding excluded direct target groups within the programming.
5. SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSIS WITH CONCLUSIONS

5.1 A model for understanding

In order to respond to the question *What policy ideals shape the development programming, and can these be linked to forms of power and the rights-based approach?* I have performed two forms of analysis. The policies expressed by the informants are firstly analyzed from contextual interpretation and negotiation on Buddhist ideals, and secondly is the programming influenced by these policies analyzed from mode of action and target groups by linking it to concepts influencing programming within contemporary international development cooperation. The suggested conclusions are here summarized in a model:

5.1.1 Summary: Buddhist ideals

- Engaged Buddhism is a recent category within academic studies and its conceptual limitation is not fixed. Consequently, the delimitation of informants within the study colour the conclusions.
- Concepts (such as “compassion”) are not necessarily equal with what is commonly assumed in the West and have different layers of meaning.
- A focus on both individual and societal change is promoted as authentic Buddhism.
- The informants are marked by Buddhist traditions of self-cultivation. Central features are not only *what* to address, but also *how* to do it based on a rich framework of moral principles.
- The communicated goals are in short, to decrease suffering and increase compassion, non-dualism, knowledge and interconnectedness by non-violent actions. Such goals
are not expressed in common contemporary activist terminology, such as of “gaining power over”, but in terms of “realizing our inter-connectedness”.

- As there is no self, opinions related to identities and division from gender, race, class, nationality, ethnicity, Buddhist school et cetera shall be counteracted.
- The actors can not necessarily be understood from a conventional political scale of left-right.
- Promotion of non-violent activism and ethics shall not automatically be equaled with that the actors would reject a national armed response if being attacked, for example.
- The informant’s do not advocate conversion of non-adherents, and evangelism is not an expressed aim. Advocating for a specific interpretation and mode of organizing can still be perceived as intra-faith evangelism. Further, they teach dharma to non-adherents, and practice the teaching-principle “show, don’t tell” also at play within evangelistic practices.

5.1.2 Summary: the Human Rights Based Approach

- From the policy perspective of this study, the topics addressed by the organizations represented by informants could be described from all topics in the UDHR for example, with exception of Articles 10,11,16,17 and 27. However, Human Rights are not used as reference in the interviews, in contrast to many CSOs within development.
- All informants’ policies include non-discrimination as central ideal and participatory observations support this, but its levels and meanings in practice are not studied.
- Participation is at the center of the informant’s policies, partly with references to Buddhist doctrines and texts. Approaches to self-governance and to Participatory Rural Appraisal are identified. Interpretations of Buddhist ethics (including self-cultivation/development of all) shape the activism, and are in parallel perceived by informants as instrumental when solving development problems.
- The early informants can indicatively be referred to the pioneers from the Global South within the international alternative development paradigm, presenting approaches that today are mainstreamed.
- All actors work towards increased accountability of duty-bearers by giving voice to views, and they suggest changes and possibly cooperation. The sampling-unit is actively participating in offering expertise and solutions, not just demanding things from the duty-bearer.
Participatory approaches of collective learning, and dialogic communication, commonly shape advocacy activities. But many communication modes are in use, including monologic actions such as public statements.

There are conflicting understandings of how direct one needs to address duty-bearers in order to enable the assumed change, and how fast the change shall be realized. The widest perspective, represented by few informants, is:” If a certain amount of individuals change from a voluntary basis and according to their own preferences, society will be changed as it is a collection of individuals.” This is contrasted with strategically directed, measurable and timely strategies for change directed at influencing behavior of a specific type of target, also in use by informants. Both modes are accepted by all but the informant’s organizations differ in how often they implement programming of either sort.

5.1.3 Summary: Power

- The goals expressed are not just related to societal problem/topic in, but are found to in parallel promote a communication culture conveying Buddhist meanings of kindness via gentle and/or corrective speech. The communication culture is part of what they try to influence in society.
- Conflicts of interest can be discursively ignored when the ideal of mutual benefit is promoted with reference to inter-relatedness and non-dualism.
- All informants aim at influencing invisible power, both constantly from how they act and what they say but also from a wide range of targeted activities addressing individuals and groups aiming at influencing socialization, meanings and values.
- All informants’ organizations address mainly informal power, including media, often by offering collaborations.
- Formal power is assumed by all to be influenced indirectly from their activities, as people influence each other. Time-frame for the desired change, or the chain of logic, is commonly not specified. Such approach can be called wishful systemic thinking, as oppose to analytical systemic thinking.
- The material indicate hypothetically that these Engaged Buddhists differ in relation to how often and how targeted they prioritize to directly influence each level of power, in particular what can be described as the ultimate gate-keepers of structural change, formal power. In conclusion, all actors do focus on changes of inner life/invisible powers and informal powers, but not all address formal power directly or frequently,
with suggestions on solutions. When comparing them on a scale, their programming tentatively positions them differently and this is reflected in the policy communication.

- Criticism of Buddhists as passive, introvert and not challenging established power, could concerning Engaged Buddhists hypothetically mainly relate to direct targeting of formal level of power.
- It can be argued from a policy perspective of contemporary development cooperation, that with exemption for a specific culture of self-formation, the informant’s promote a set of approaches not necessarily unique for CSOs but with common denominators. Further, the communicated policies do hypothetically not differ within the sampling-group at an essential level related to views on Buddhism, general approaches to development or topics, but rather on frequency regarding excluded direct target groups in the programming.

5.2 Weaknesses and strengths of the analysis
The weakness of the analysis is firstly the lack of in-depth studies of the tentative conclusions suggested, such as the take on participation, formal power or the multi-track ComDev approach. A second weakness is connecting the label in use presently, Engaged Buddhism, to a small and common group of informants, as contested by some scholars. If accepting broader views on Buddhist social action such as related to evangelism, state-submissiveness or violence, other findings will appear. Thirdly, this explorative qualitative research method is unlikely to be repeated by another researcher with similar outcome.

The strength of the analysis is firstly the rich material processed over long time: direct sources of prominent actors of the movement in five countries; varied participatory observations; and literature from many fields. The reliability can therefore be considered high. Secondly, the analysis of action and methods draw from both from my ten years of experiences and from guiding documents by normative global development actors on contemporary development practices. Given the limited access to studies on Buddhist action related to the social and cultural structures of contemporary development cooperation, the conclusions could thirdly contribute to knowledge of some use for practitioners and scholars within the field of development.

Finally, the introduction of a threefold model for power-analysis contributes to concretization of programming from holistic/systemic approaches. Wishful systemic thinking
could be replaced with more critically targeted systemic thinking. In particular one central question for all development action could be better responded to: Who is influenced, and to what extent? This could contribute to a more nuanced understanding of actors using systemic thinking. For example, instead of describing all Buddhist action as introvert and happiness-oriented, Buddhist action can be addressed from the form of power it challenges, and how often or direct.
6. DISCUSSION

Hemer and Tufte describe ComDev not as an emerging academic discipline in traditional sense, but also as a multidisciplinary field of theory and practice (2012:235). They argue that there is more than ever a need for “cross- or inter-disciplinarity”. Their view is reflected by many scholars referred to in this study. From comparisons of the literature and informants’ views, and my professional experience of development programming, I also stress the importance of multiple perspectives when conceptualizing and analyzing what is today called Engaged Buddhism. Such further research could study: comparative analysis with not faith-based CSOs by using analytical tools of benefit for both (such as invisible/informal/formal power); comparison between morally based activism and religious evangelism; assumed gaps between leaders’ policies and participants’ perceptions; if Engaged Buddhist organizations are non-discriminatory, results from influencing informal power expressed in religious and development terminology respectively; and to what extent actors who claim they change formal power really do so.

I suggest that ComDev offers a specific dimension to multi-disciplinary work as it is a practice as well as an academic field. It invites practitioner perspectives and has already succeeded with attracting experienced practitioners globally to post-graduate studies such as at Malmö University. A broad take on development is further coupled with a multitude of accepted methods, a creative necessity as it seems when wanting to both encourage and cater for inclusion of practitioner’s diverse contributions. Research on critical approaches to the industry is more useful for the industry if being based on insight and contemporary understanding of its procedures.

6.1 Do Engaged Buddhist avoid challenging power?
I suggest from this study that the Engaged Buddhists included in it promote policies and programming compatible with contemporary ideals within international development cooperation. In the introduction, I addressed possible structural reasons for a statistical under-representation of Buddhist organizations in international development cooperation. In 4.2.3, I further discussed how the structures within development cooperation can hinder normatively promoted preferences, such as enabling programming aiming at self-sustainability and participatory approaches. My conclusion was that development donors should adjust its working procedures to better cater for such civil society programming.
In this discussion, I suggest that civil society actors promoting systemic thinking, such as the informants’ organizations, can learn from cultures promoted within the development industry. This limited exercise indicates that by combining basic strategic communication analysis with the power analysis model of invisible, informal and formal power, differences in programming will become more visible. Further, self-cultivating and transformative activities can probably be better identified compared to using a one-dimensional power-model, one that equals self-transformation aims with therapy.

The Introduction introduced a line of thought in this study that can be framed as a stereotyping of Buddhism as happiness-oriented, introvert and passive. Many of my informants are peace-activist, but there is a growing bulk of research concerning responses to war-fare that discusses how Buddhist teachings historically has been referred to for silent or directly supported state militarism and aggressive inequality. Previous chapters have pointed at a discourse also among Buddhist scholars and activists concerning a passive and dismissive side of Buddhism. Watts argues for example that there is a lack of engagement among all Buddhists in social injustice (2009a:viii).

Engaged Buddhism is commonly presented as partly a response to such societal features, but is also criticized: Queen has in this study questioned if the gentle communication mode used by prominent Engaged Buddhist leaders is a moral right response related to suffering (2003). The outspoken informant Sulak Sivaraksa in my primary material strongly criticizes Engaged Buddhists for becoming “all goody-goody” if not criticizing powers. Watts has further identified a problem with too much closeness between Buddhist leaders and state powers (2009c), and an on-going tendency of not to criticize powers, such as after the Fukushima threefold disaster 2011 (2012b). To introduce a recent example, Westendorp writes that Buddhist actors at best could be “described as muted” during the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong 2014, and states that media criticized them for playing a less active role compared to Christian actors (2015).

Criticism of Buddhism as passive is still commonly rejected by Buddhists. It is often argued that those making such statements have a too narrow or impatient view on how to achieve change. Scholars of religion can as response discuss secular misunderstandings regarding religiously framed action. And participants within development programming that have experienced transformative effects do not legitimize the critique. It seems to be a stalemate situation with little space for neutral discussions.
This limited exercise exploring cultural negotiations on how to understand Buddhist ideals from a societal perspective; on programming principles related to invisible, informal and formal power; and communication modes conveying certain positions on how to interact in the public space, has hopefully contributed to more nuanced discussions. I find that when leaving wishful systemic thinking and aiming for critical systemic thinking, a more nuanced discussion on power is presented. If departing from analysis of the development activities effects on invisible, informal and formal power, the stalemate positioning of Buddhist actors as either passive or active can be transformed into nuanced discussions from more instrumental perspectives, better enabling comparisons with other actors work.
7. SUMMARY

1. This master thesis in Communication for Development (ComDev) presents how nine Engaged Buddhists at policy level, from Vietnam, India, Japan, Thailand and Sri Lanka, communicate aims and methods. They are selected with the aim of studying how programming can be influenced by specific interpretations of moral guidelines and beliefs, and how suggested effects from holistic, system thinking programming can be analyzed and compared. The findings answer the research question What policy ideals shape the development programming, and can these be linked to forms of power and the rights-based approach? Some informants are world famous, others have recently started. Buddhist Civil Society Organizations are statistically underrepresented as recognized objects in international development cooperation and reasons are discussed related to stereotyping of Buddhism, donor preferences and structures influencing donors’ and Buddhists action respectively.

Chapter 2: The ontology of critical realism is pursued by a mixed method approach that both critically studies primary and secondary sources discursively from identified themes, and contributes with previously quite unexplored perspectives on influential features within the social and cultural structures of development cooperation practice. Informants’ interpretations of Buddhism are approached agnostically, making reflexivity urgent regarding how religion is being translated. The main research method is qualitative interviewing complemented by multi-sited participatory observations. A possible lack of depth can be assumed due to limited time, however exploring different sites creates additional depth enabled by space.

In order to establish clarity despite rich material, the next two chapters unconventionally identify literature and thematic theories directly followed by analysis of the material.

Chapter 3 explores perspectives on religious actors working with social change as CSOs. Literature on Engaged Buddhism has emerged from 1996 primarily within the field of religion, and is then commonly described from why, and what, but rarely from how related to development cooperation. Western influences are more highlighted in literature than by the informants. Engaged Buddhism is addressed as a post-war worldwide movement with limited contact between actors, visible in all Buddhist traditions and expressing interpretations of Buddhism as non-violent practical action. Actors engage directly with the social, political, economic and ecological problems of society, not without critique from other Buddhists. Engaged Buddhist relate to traditions marked by practices of self-transformation. Famous leaders are the late Dalit leader B.R Ambedkar of India, the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat
Hanh, and the 14th Dalai Lama exiled from Tibet. I reject scholarly suggestions on framing actors as predominantly leftist, and to exclude non-violence as common denominator.

Chapter 4 departs from major strands within international development cooperation. The informants’ do commonly not refer to Human Rights, even if this could be valid given the topics discussed. Principles within the Human Rights Based Approach are endorsed, in particular participation and indicatively accountability. The dominant ideal among informants of non-discrimination is however not an aspect systematically included in the material. Collaborations are commonly used for enabling advocacy impact. Dialogic modes of communication are expressed as ideal, but the ComDev multi-track model is identified as dominant approach. In parallel with addressing development topics, informants promote a communication culture conveying Buddhist meanings of “kindness” understood as gentle and/or corrective speech. Analysis from three forms of power indicates that not all address formal power directly targeted, nor frequently. Hypothetically, the activism is predominantly targeting invisible and informal power. Related to this sampling-unit, criticism of Buddhists actors as passive, introvert, and/or not criticizing powers could as conclusion be nuanced into limited targeting of formal power.

Chapter 5 provides this model on how the development programming is shaped by policy ideals, with suggested linkages to the rights-based approach and forms of power:

Chapter 6. Research on contemporary development cooperation and Buddhism is a rare combination, and I raise the importance of inter-disciplinary cooperation, and the inclusion of practitioner’s experiences. The repeated discussion on Buddhism as passive or active is suggested to become more nuanced if analyzing power from the threefold model used here.
REFERENCES

Interviews with informants, organized from the acronyms in the study:
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BD/Bhikkuni Dhammananda, Abbess of Songdhammakalyani Monastery
www.thaibhikkhunis.org, co-founder of Sakyaditha International Association of Buddhist
GK/Gakugen Yoshimizu, priest. Co-founder and director of the organization One spoonful.
No webpage in English. Tokyo, Japan, June 3 and 8, 2012.
KF/ Koji Fujimaki, chef. Co-founder of the organization One spoonful. No webpage in
English. Tokyo, Japan, June 3 and 8 2012.
YO/Yukan Ogawa priest and temple manager. Member of the association Priests who battle
with the suicide issue. No webpage in English. Tokyo, Japan, June 6, 2012.
YM/ Yuzon Maeda, priest and temple manager. Co-founder of the association Priests who
battle with the suicide issue. No webpage in English. Tokyo, June, Japan, 6, 2012.
SJ/Savita Jadhav, Founder and director of Sadhana Institute for Sustainable Development in
the cantonement Dehu Road of Pune, India. No webpage in English. October 2011.
SS/ Sulak Sivaraksa, publisher and founder of Silkworm Publishing, NGOs such as
International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). www.inebnetwork.org, and SEM,

Other
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Förlag; Stockholm.
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i samhället.* Skellefteå: Artos & Norma Bokförlag.


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Harvey, P. (2012). An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics. 10th printing, (9th was corrected). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees/UNHCR (2014). *Partnership note on faith-based organizations, local faith communities and faith leaders.* Geneve, UNHCR.


Appendix 1: Performed field work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Informant and place for the interview</th>
<th>Tradition</th>
<th>Organisation and webpage (in English)</th>
<th>Length of interview and participatory observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Savita Jadhav, Sadhana Institute for Sustainable Development in Pune, India. October 2011.</td>
<td>Ambedkarite Buddhist (Navayana. Influenced by Theravada)</td>
<td>Founder and expert on social action for development. No website but presentations at: <a href="http://www.cry.org/projects/Maharashtra-project3.html">www.cry.org/projects/Maharashtra-project3.html</a></td>
<td>Ten days in the Pune cantonement Dehu Road with Sadhana and Savita Jadhav, volunteer work on improving an application to the Big Lottery Fund in the UK. Two hours formal interview with SJ. Translator when talking to program participant’s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Koji Fujimaki and 5. Gakugen</td>
<td>Jodo Shin-shu (Mayahayana)</td>
<td>One spoonful.</td>
<td>3 hours formal interviews together and separate. One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Informant</td>
<td>Field</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yoshimizu, chef and priest. Tokyo, June 3 and 8 2012</td>
<td>No webpage in English.</td>
<td>day and night participation in One spoonful’s soup-kitchen and addressing homeless persons in Tokyo. Translator.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Bhikkuni Dhammananda, Abbess. August 2-6 2012 in Nakon Pathom, Thailand.</td>
<td>Theravada.</td>
<td>Songdhammakalyani Monastery <a href="http://www.thaibhikkhunis.org">www.thaibhikkhunis.org</a></td>
<td>2.5 hours formal interview. 4 days and nights living with the nuns in the monastery (separate bedroom). Translator during half the time of the co-living.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Sulak Sivaraksa, publisher and founder of CSOs. August 8, 2012 i in Bangkok, Thailand.</td>
<td>Theravada.</td>
<td>International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). <a href="http://www.inebnetwork.org">www.inebnetwork.org</a> Founder of among others, Silkworm press and SEM, Spirit in Education Movement <a href="http://www.sem-edu.org">www.sem-edu.org</a></td>
<td>1.5 hours interview in his home. Two days of secondary interviews with his partners in social ventures, visit at ventures. His organization have been visited by me before, two years earlier.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional informants**

Additional fact-finding interviews were made related to each of the Key Informants.

Firstly, I talked extensively with villagers and participants of activities during my field trip observations. For example, more than 10 persons in the villages of Pelani and Hippola in Sri Lanka,
and over 10 persons in Tokyo, Plum Village and the monastery of bhikkhuni Dhammananda respectively.

Secondly, key additional informants were participants of the leader’s projects, and persons providing contextual theoretical understanding. A selection of the latter: the former Major General and now hermitage forest-monk Bhikkhu Ananda shared his perspective on the matter as a former soldier. Wallapa van Willenswaard-Kuntiranont, business manager of social ventures connected to Sulak Sivaraksa, and former staff member of SEM, Spirit in Education Movement, gave important views on his work and activism after 2000. Khin Moe Sein, author and managing editor of the independent television and webb outlet Democratic Voice of Burma gave valuable insights into Right speech in Chiang Mai in Thailand. August 16, 2012.

Thirdly, researches have reviewed my assumptions and suggestions regarding informants and the topic: In Sri Lanka, Professor P.D Premasiri Emeritus Professor of Buddhist Studies at University of Peradeniya and President of the Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, gave important perspectives on the canonical scriptures related to violence.

The researcher Jonathan Watts has contributed uniquely with research and practical help. He works as teacher in contemporary Buddhism at Keio University in Japan, is fellow researcher at International Buddhist Exchange Center (IBEC) in Yokohama and member of the executive committee of International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). I also interviewed and recorded June 3 and 10 2012.

In particular PhD Katarina Plank at The department of religion at Gothenburg University has provided support with factual control of my statement on Buddhism.
Appendix 2: Example of policy changes over time
This table shows how the work of engaged Buddhism can change over time.

This is a highly summarized presentation of media-focused activism regarding the movement of Thich Naht Hanh and Sister Chan Khong in this study. The schematic examples of findings is based on an analysis presented in a previous assignment of the ComDev Master Program and relates to identified features of globalization and transnationalism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Main source of information:</strong> Sister Chan Khong's autobiography, 1993.</td>
<td><strong>Main source of information:</strong> Personal Interview with Sister Chan Khong, the Plum Village official webpage, and participatory observations in August 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>objective</td>
<td>b) Safe living and visas for &quot;boat people”/ Vietnamese refugees.</td>
<td>b) Spreading the practice of mindfulness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Spreading the practice of mindfulness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Promote a culture of peace and eco-living.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors in focus for enabling the desired change/ Target groups</td>
<td>a) Political and university leaders in Vietnam including those negotiating peace abroad.</td>
<td>a) The US president and Buddhist groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Influential decision-makers in the US primary, in France secondary</td>
<td>b) Not decision-makers but the general public in the West.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Mobilizing the general public, approaching the UNESCO with suggestions such as “A global car-free day per year”.</td>
<td>c) Mobilizing the general public, connecting with foreign key celebrities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Media campaigns in Asia inviting global media.</td>
<td>b &amp; c) Creating eco-villages in France and the US where the public can visit or live with little harm on the environment. Enabling courses for mindfulness-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding comparison:</td>
<td>Specific political objectives wanted.</td>
<td>Compassion in action, non-violence, interconnectedness and mindfulness wanted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specificity</td>
<td>Decision-makers and brokers targeted. Direct access to key media persons, to diplomatic figures and global celebrities. Elite press in the US and Europe influencing other media is targeted.</td>
<td>Limited media exposure. Communication with westerners interested in mindfulness. A variety of media forms is produced by 20-40 persons in the sangha, mainly social media, webb-broadcasting and printing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media approach</td>
<td>The UN human rights are not being referred to (UN, 1948). The concepts interconnectedness and one-ness instead of “the other” are used.</td>
<td>The UN human rights are not being referred to. The concepts interconnectedness and one-ness instead of “the other” are used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td>The identity of the intellectual and peaceful monk from an oppressive, exotic third world country, TNH, is a key aspect for reaching out positively. Nobody seemed to question that he led a very small and loose organization.</td>
<td>The identity and simple living opposing a consumerist world of the scholar and monk TNH is central for mobilizing visits and supporters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global discourses</td>
<td>Training to people, and teach a basic and positive Buddhism in a non-institutional form approachable for westerners.</td>
<td>Publish books on ethics and mindfulness written by groups but signed by TNH. Informal talks invited by the UN and The Dalai Lama. Publishing of teachings and audiovisual material primarily in English, world-wide via ICT and print: On-line lecturing and the use of social media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The western interest of the time for “third world” liberation movements, in particular against the so called US imperialism, helped the outreach.</td>
<td>The western interest for mindfulness as stress reduction method and for eastern traditions as authentic help for the side-effects of modern life, helps the outreach.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: the Book script
A presentation of the book in English, (not yet published) and a description of the content:

To change the world and oneself

*Leading Engaged Buddhists on how to influence the inner and outer world*

(working title)

Buddhism is among the most widespread of religions, and in many Western countries the fastest growing one. Most people in Sweden below 30 years appreciate Buddhism before other belief-systems. Buddhist philosophy and mental techniques are used today in the Swedish health care, education and even in the industry, and flights between Sweden and Buddhist countries are frequent. Yet, few Swedes know how Buddhism affects people and societies. What ethical guidelines have you as a Buddhist, and what does it mean in interaction with others? How does Buddhism influence areas such as business, gender roles, culture, social policy, the warfare, the interpretation of human rights or the mental culture?

The journalist and international development worker, Kristin Olson has travelled the Asian countries and met with senior leaders who are trying to change the world with the Buddha as teacher. They work on issues such as reconciliation, consumption, climate anxiety, racism and conflicts based on hands-on solutions. Buddhist cultural tradition is related to everything from media production to mass meditation, eco-business and mobilizing slum dwellers. The reportages describe simultaneously emotional and crucial issues relevant to life here also whatever existential beliefs you have.

The pioneer thinkers and activists Thich Nhat Hanh, Sulak Sivaraksa, AT Ariyaratne and Bhikkuni Dhammananda, and the other interesting persons interviewed in the book, are all diverse with varied perspectives but part of a global movement called Engaged Buddhism, or Socially Engaged Buddhism. Just as the exiled 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar, they refer to universalism, cultural references and a 2500-year moral philosophy when they present concrete peaceful ways to transform modern society socially, economically, politically and mentally.

The main characters of the book are knowledgeable leaders from Vietnam, Japan, India, Thailand, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Many have made great impressions, has been nominated for the Nobel Prize, and made international contributions to methods for sustainable development and advocacy for peace. Others are have just begun their work but has already attracted interest, such as feminists in Thailand and the young priests who have created a new platform in society thanks to their work in Fukushima after Japan's earthquake and nuclear disaster 2011.

Buddhism is often presented as a mild, consistent and uncontroversial. Be prepared to reconsider such an impression. The participant’s re-interpret the texts tainted by historic
power-struggles, and are critical to their traditions. They want to establish non-dualism by returning to the humanistic core and to means of interconnectedness.

**CONTENT**

**Introduction**

Presentation of Engaged Buddhism, the participants and the delimitations shaping the content.

*Facts/Box: The historical Buddha and other Buddhas*

*Facts/Box: The Four Noble Truths*

*Map of Theravada and Mahayana regions in Asia.*

1. **How much peace is needed inside? Training camp with Thich Nhat Hanh**

Societal change begins inside each one, says the world-renowned peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh from Vietnam. Westerners flock to his beautiful ecological monasteries to learn Buddhism and train themselves in kindness and mindfulness. But how do you know that it is changing the world?  
*Facts/Box: Middle Way: The Noble Eightfold Path*

2. **Seven ways to rock the mountain in good spirit.**

The influential Sister Chan Khong tells about their strategies as she helped Thich Nhat Hanh as his constant companion through the years. They bought huge ships to offer the boat people of Vietnam 45 years ago to live in, and negotiated with the major powers - always with an eye inward toward his own emotional life.  
*Facts/Box: What does it mean to be Buddhist?*

*Facts/Box: Meditation and mindfulness*

3. **Fear is a dirty word when Little Gandhi mobilizes the masses.**

The world’s most comprehensive Buddhist development projects have been in Sri Lanka for over 50 years. While the war raged, residents have trained themselves to rebuild their villages together in an iconic way. Micro-credit, self-help and mass meditations for peace have been developed by the founder AT Ariyaratne despite repeated threats and attempted murder.  
*Facts/Box: The non-self, an unsolved mystery.*

*Facts/Box: Non-violence as ideal or strategy.*

*Facts/Box: Everyone loses someone: Kisa Gotamis grief.*

4. **To kill in the name of Buddhism. A hermit monk and former soldier explains.**

The view of Buddhism as soft, peaceful and apolitical become unworldly when you see how the teachings again and again have been made useful in warfare. Non-violence ideals is not the same as pacifism. Hermit Bhikkhu Ananda, a former major general in the government army explains his view now and then.  
*Facts/Box: Metta: A common exercise in kindness.*
Facts/Box: The Karma Account.

5. Focus on change. Revolution and the democratic evolution in Pune's slums.

Savita Jadhav is a Dalit (untouchable) and runs a small institute in Pune, India, where slum dwellers trains in targeted activism so that the country's social systems will also reach them. Buddhism among dalit Indians connects to Human Rights and is far from being an introverted meditation exercise.

Facts/Box: Human rights, democracy and Buddhism.

6. Buddhism - silence or silencing?

Buddhism has many texts that celebrate silence and kind speech. At the same time, freedom of expression is limited in many Buddhist countries. The outspoken pioneer Sulak Sivaraksa has repeatedly been prosecuted for defamation majesty in Thailand. He is however more critical to the Buddhists than to Buddhism. The former political prisoner Khin Maung Soe, who is the television director at the Democratic Voice of Burma, discusses Budhist ethics and public criticism by media.

7. Indras net: Young Japanese want to make Buddhism meaningful again

In Japan, Buddhism has made itself unnecessary according to a small growing movement of Engaged Buddhists. Young priests who more or less reluctantly entered into the profession by heredity, aims at changing the negative trend by reinventing Buddhism. They help the homeless and suicide candidates, and work in Fukushima’s radioactive area. Zen Buddhists, however, has a special legacy to handle because of the historical support for Japan's warfare.

Facts/Box: The striped policies of Buddhist economy and politics

8. Social ventures expand the circles

Buddha's instructions regarding economy and trade has inspired many, but are not easy to follow. Engaged Buddhists are interested in Fair Trade and socially responsible enterprise, different ways to achieve national happiness and in realization of so-called Buddhist economics. Business owners in Japan, Sri Lanka and Thailand talk about how they balance ideals with reality for a brighter future.

Facts/Box: Corporate social responsibility - now more than CFLs.

9. Can only men can become enlightened? To overthrow male dominance in Thailand with friendly mind.

Although the tourism authority of Thailand long used the "Land of Smiles" as slogan, it is not as fun if you want to live there as a nun under the same beneficiary conditions as monks. Bhikkuni Dhammananda is a feminist icon for her knowledge and cunning power struggle. Something new is happening now, slowly flowing like water. But why did the Buddha hesitate to accept women?
Appendix 4: Transcription - an example

Transcription 1 of 3 of the conversation with Sulak Sivaraksa in Bangkok 2012

✓ Paus/hesitation is marked as …
✓ Pieces that are hard to hear or understand: [00:03:04.29], or with a guess: [things? 00:03:04.29].
✓ My clarifications: [in London]
✓ Laughter are marked as: (skratt)
✓ KO: Kristin Olson
✓ SS: Sulak Sivaraksa

[00:00:06.13] Kristin Olson: Could you describe Engaged Buddhism in the 60s’, in the 80s’ and now?

[00:00:20.02] Sulak Sivaraksa: You know of course the word was coined by [name 0:23], but if I may say so, I put it into operation. That’s why the International Network of Engaged Buddhism came into being. INEB now over 25 years old. If you want to know the difference you have to look up INEB’s… and what they’re working on. And the [0:54] were to tell you that those young people work – people like Jonathan Watts, who was here at the monastery inception of INEB, and the other person, perhaps you don’t know him, [name 1:05]? You don’t know him? You should interview him. He was helping me starting INEB. He’s now very active, but mostly locally, training young Buddhists. Very active. And of course [name 1:22] who just came here, who is now running INEB. If you want the development between these two or three decades you should talk to them, not me.

[00:01:36.00] KO: OK. I read in Sister [name 1:36]’s autobiography – very interesting, she’s very outspoken – as she described how Thich Nhat Hanh went up to the patriarchs in Vietnam and suggested to work on Engaged Buddhism. And they were telling him he’s a poet. He’s a visionary poet. And now when he describes Engaged Buddhism it’s not so much society anymore, it’s very much focused on internal development. So, I was thinking that different things are needed in different times. Do you think so? Was it more important 40 years ago to talk about social issues than it is today?

[00:02:14.06] SS: If you ask me honestly... I will say that Thich Nhat Hanh changed, not Socially Engaged Buddhism. He became less engaged, because he now has his empire. He has so many… retreat houses ... and he has many monks and land and when he travels he has a big entourage, a hundred people travelling with him. I challenged him last time he was here. He hobnobs more with the rich than the poor. He said “no, no, no that [2:56]”, both him and [name 2:58]. But he evidently had a retreat here. We had to pay. Even volunteers had to pay a minimum. But what about the poor? The Buddha never charged. … Anyhow, we have differences. I still respect him, but we have much more differences now. Once you become [00:03:20.19] or once you want... big organisations... you become Bmore in your business, engaged for the maintenance of your organisation rather than confronting dukkha in society. That's my reading. Even [name 00:03:47.00]... It was started by my friend, [name 00:03:52.12]. He was shut out. It's now run by the so-called [United church? 3:39]. [name 4:03] knows how to run it, but he claims to know everything. I beg to differ.

[00:04:12.01] KO: I was also surprised that it's so focused on him as a person. Not so much division of labor.
SS: Precisely. We all become... a hero. At least so far, I have managed to avoid that heroism in our setup. They can criticize me openly, because I know that if I don't allow them they'll criticize me behind my back anyhow. I think it's much healthier to have open criticism.

KO: Why do you think engaged Buddhism is needed today? With all these social welfare systems and all that?

SS: Engaged Buddhism is a word we try to tell Westerners... Because when the word Buddhism was known in the West, I think it started in France, then [00:05:12.11], and when the Westerners became interested in Buddhism they thought only of meditation. I myself, when I first went to England I joined the London Buddhist Society. Mr Christmas Humphries - I know him very well, very nice man - he said to me "Buddhism is to meditate, nothing else. You see, Christianity went wrong, because Christianity got involved in politics, society..." He has a point. And he was very good, he opened the practice to Theravada, Mahayana and later on Tibetan by practicing meditation. And for me, that's why I felt the word Engaged Buddhism is just to remind Westerners. Because the teachings of the Buddha all were dealing not only with yourself. The first in the three basic trainings, sila, [00:06:06.26] ethical code, but sila is also synonym with [00:06:16.04] - "how to be normal", "how to be natural". Society must be normal, natural. There is no violence in society, no violence in yourself, the [00:06:30.23] and the poor should be reduced. S-ila - normal. Environmental balance. So you see, that is the whole world, the sila. And I feel in the West if you don't understand that... Meditation... Those who come to Buddhism in the West are mostly upper class, middle class. If you don't understand the lower class and you don't realize that your lifestyle produces suffering for them, for me that is escapism. Socially Engaged Buddhism is a new word for the West but in our tradition sila is always there, the key. Sila is to put some of the meditation into practice and to practice how to behave to others. We are interlinked and we are all equal. We must respect each other and others - nature, human beings, [00:07:27.00] beings. That's why, for me, Socially Engaged Buddhism goes back to the orientation of the Buddha - nothing new. Only words are new.

KO: I noticed that the monastics that I interview are less interested in using the concept, because they think that Buddhism has always been engaged.

SS: Precisely.

KO: Now with your explanation of the Western perspective I understand better.

SS: Even the West, you see... Coming back to the Buddhist society [in London], 84 years old today, they have not changed. My book is not even reviewed. None of my books are reviewed.

KO: In Thailand?

SS: [00:08:12.07], organ of the oldest Buddhist society in London, never touched my book. It's escapism. But at the same time in England there are so many groups now. Engaged Buddhism all over. And in America [00:08:24.27]. Now the Buddhist fellowship is 30 years old. I was one of those [00:08:33.26] that started the care for suffering in society, in the world. Tremendous. Which means that you must also work with non-Buddhists, you must work closely with the Christians, with the Muslims, non-believers, we are all in some [00:08:49.01] together.

KO: What is the usual criticism from Buddhists here against Engaged Buddhism?
SS: Well, they could not find any words of the Buddha to criticize us. For instance, some of them said we are too lenient to the Christians. I said “you call the Buddha, Buddha would approve what I'm doing.” They feel it's untraditional, but I said untraditional only recently. Buddhism has become part and parcel of the nation state, that is why it's become untraditional. And did you feel [00:09:27.05] is superior? Theravada superior to Mahayana? I think this is rubbish. Once you put it into “inferior - superior”, you are not Buddhist. That's selfishness is coming into it. You cannot claim that we are better than Christians. We are in the same samsara, we are friends. We are fighting against dukkha - not only personal dukkha but social dukkha, environmental dukkha.

KO: What other kinds of criticism does Engaged Buddhism get from politics? From Christians, from Muslims?

SS: I don't know. I mean... If they say so, I'm willing to... listen to criticism, because criticism is good. If they don't make sense I feel sorry for them, but if they make sense we must change. It's good. I always welcome criticism.

KO: I noticed. (skratt)

KO: Jonathan has written some texts from the concept that Engaged Buddhism in Japan deals with reform, relief and evangelism. Can you elaborate a little bit about these three concepts, what you think of them from a development perspective?

SS: Relief is a good thing to do, but that's basic. But reform... For me, it's not the reform of Buddhism, not the reform of the sangha but reform of society. I think this is where most Buddhists are weak. I have talked, I am happy to say, successfully with Taiwanese Buddhists. I feel they have done wonderful things on social welfare, on caring, nurturing, but they are weak on reforming. Because when you reform you have to challenge the powers that be. That's why most Buddhists avoid it. I think we have to. But we have to have the Buddhist perspective on reforming society - breaching the gap between the rich and the poor. You have to use skillful means, you have to use non-violence. If you are not careful you join a political party, like the [namn [00:11:58.10]. They form a [00:12:00.24] for society. They've become much more... reactionary than the liberal democrats. We must learn, this is where Christmas Humphries is right. This is why the Christian democrats in Europe become very conservative. I think to reform... You must not use political means [00:12:21.26] people to reform peacefully, non-violently. That would be my understanding of Socially Engaged Buddhism.

KO: It is difficult to reform, but do you think also one reason why they're not choosing reform as a goal is something in how they interpret Buddhism? Like Buddhism shouldn't be focusing on reform?

SS: I don't know, you'd have to ask them. I can't speak for them. But to be fair, as you know last year they gave me the Niwano peace price. They avoided giving that to me for a long long time. I'm the 28th [laureate], you see. They gave it to [namn [00:13:13.11]]. He's very nice, a lovely man, but he would not challenge the powers that be. I'm supposed to be the first [00:13:25.21] among Buddhist who challenge the powers that be. But they plucked enough courage to give it to me, partly because... because of Katherine... Marshall. She was the chair of the [judges[00:13:43.20] and she knows me so well and she - she's not Buddhist. I think she carried weight, otherwise they would have been reluctant because I'm too much opposing the powers that be.

KO: Is this because Buddhist leaders are close to power, in every country?
SS: Yes, but Buddhism becomes much better when they are not with the power. That's why in Burma Buddhism became much more hopeful - because they challenge the government. And Buddhism is Tibet is wonderful because they are against the Chinese. Both in Burma and in Tibet they use the Buddhist way of reforming. Non-violence, peace. Truth.

KO: You write in your book about the historical context of Buddhism that the sangha was basically a corrective organisation to the state. Is this tricky because you have to be close to the state and still independent from the state?

SS: Yes, that you call "the two-wheel theory". The state is "the wheel of power". The sangha is "the wheel of righteousness". And destroyed this country a hundred years ago, when the state overruled - ran over - the.

That's why it's become very weak now in this country, whereas in Burma it's still strong because they don't care about the state.

KO: What do you think about the concept of evangelism, missionaries, from a Buddhist perspective? Like Ambedkar?

SS: No, has a good cause because he cares for the, he cares for the, he cares for the underprivileged. So the message for those is to awake, to become free. I think that message is needed for everyone. But then it would not be Buddhist. I think the Buddha would be the first to deny evangelism, because in our tradition a man is not allowed to preach unless invited. It's against the rules. So evangelism in a Buddhist context is that you practice the teachings of Buddha and then if they like your way of living they will be influenced by your way of living. Only then, if they're interested, you can help tell them what is the essence of the teachings. If you go out and tell how wonderful the Buddha is I think that is just worse than selling Coca-Cola, Pepsi Cola.

KO: I agree. I also think maybe it could be accused of being structural violence.

SS: Structural violence of course is... you have to help people to understand structural violence. I think for me that is a main, essential element of Engaged Buddhism. Because without understanding structural violence I think we shall become "goody-goody", you know? Because the five precepts, fundamental in the teachings of the Buddha, are entirely against violence. The first precept is against the violence on life, the second precept is against violence on property, the third precept is against the violence on gender, the fourth precept against violence on speech - which words and the fifth precept means you take others - it needn't be alcohol, it could be drugs, even propaganda, even advertisements. It makes you become mindless and then you commit all kinds of violence. But, the point is that nowadays violence against life... We don't do it directly anymore but we allow the state to do it. You see? Unless you challenge the state. The state is the whole structural violence of society, the same. You don't steal, but you allow the bank to steal. The World Bank, the IMF, that you have to understand. You can't commit mass adultery, but you allow television, mass media, you know, to do all kinds of things against gender issues. I think that's why you have to be aware of structural violence if you want to bring the teachings of the Buddha to become meaningful in reforming society and yourself.
KO: Can I ask what you talked to Aung San Suu Kyi about? What did she ask you about?

SS: I am going to talk with her next week, in her place.

KO: So what would you like to tell her?

SS: I'd rather not talk about that. I want to be confidential.

KO: I understand that. I'm just curious. (skratt)

SS: If you don't record, I will tell you. If you turn the recorder off.